

Practical Tips for Visiting Faculty

Harlaxton College

Academic Year 2011-12

Introduction

Welcome to Harlaxton College! This collection of “bits and bobs” shares the experiences of others who have come before you and seeks to help you with what one writer has called “the daily bookkeeping of existence” in a sometimes-strange land.

Harlaxton is a unique living-learning experience. We seek, intentionally, to integrate classroom activities, extracurricular pursuits, travel, and daily experience of the British culture to create a powerful learning experience for students and faculty alike. For this reason, classes are usually scheduled four days a week to allow ample time for experiential learning.

The keystone of the academic programme is ID 282/382, British Studies, in which all students are enrolled. This course provides an excellent framework for understanding the British experience, and all Visiting Faculty members and spouses are not only welcome but urged to attend.

While much of the extracurricular programme is standardized, the activities differ each semester based on the talents and interests that each person brings to Harlaxton. We encourage you to share your talents with us. Students may organize and participate in music groups, aerobics, Bible study, choir, sports, theatre, art—the list varies

from term to term. If there is some way that you can help us, please let us know.

We also ask faculty members and their families to volunteer in making our little community go. Volunteers run the Harlaxton Boutique, help in the Conservatory and gardens, help in the Library or archives, make photographic records of the semester, run the Coffee Shop, coach basketball—we need and want your talents in creating the Harlaxton community.

Also, we hope the faculty will serve as role models for the students by becoming involved, remaining flexible, and displaying openness to new ideas and to a different culture. Students should learn that this semester is a time to be alert to, and inquisitive about, British and European life and culture.

The natives are friendly, so if you have any questions please do ask – we will all do our best to help.

Preparation for Harlaxton College

By this time, you as a faculty member who will be teaching at Harlaxton College will be “into” or will have completed the following:

1. Contacting Linda Dawes (ldawes@harlaxton.ac.uk), college librarian/academic support manager, to order textbooks;
2. Posting your course syllabi on line on the Harlaxton web site, via Earl Kirk, the Harlaxton Coordinator Stateside;
3. Consulting with your Office of Personnel about receiving your pay check;
4. Checking to make sure you and your dependents are medically insured in England and Europe;

5. Managing any necessary immigration formalities, guided by Earl Kirk and his knowledge of the many changes in British immigration law.

As the British people said and demonstrated in World War II (and have adopted as a kind of slogan now), "Keep Calm and Carry On."

Finances

Exchange: Bank Cash Cards (ATM)

Let's just say it flat out: use your own bank cash cards (ATM) to get English currency. ATM machines are everywhere, the exchange rate is lower, and you don't have to bother with carrying a lot of cash or travelers' checks. Just pop your card into a machine at the airport upon arrival, keystroke in your normal PIN, and out comes "free" money—you are ready to go. Not your credit card, which accrues interest payments, but your bank ATM card. ATMs are everywhere, including in Harlaxton Manor.

Exchange: Fees and Services

If you are exchanging cash or travelers' checks, you should know that fees for currency exchange differ from place to place: fees also depend upon how much money you are trying to convert into British currency. Charges of £5 are not unusual. Some places will not allow an exchange fee to be paid by credit card, so ask about fees first. Few, if any, places will deal with the exchange of foreign coins.

Once you are at the College, the Business Office offers an exchange service for faculty, will cash pay checks and personal checks, and will extend cash on presentation of a credit card.

The Grantham Post Office also exchanges money for a fee (not just British currency, but also Euros for travel in Europe or Ireland). You can also exchange money for European travel at major rail stations and airports.

But, again, ATMs are the best choice and are available everywhere, in any European country.

Checks: Personal, Travelers', Pay

Personal Checks

Personal checks may be cashed in the Business Office up until the final month of the term.

Travelers' Checks

Travelers' checks may be cashed in the Business Office. When cashing a travelers' check already converted to British pounds, you receive the face amount immediately. If the check is in dollars, however, it will be converted to pounds based on that day's exchange rate. A small commission will be charged.

Pay Checks

Pay checks may be cashed in the Business Office, and so there is no need to open a bank account in Britain unless you just want the experience. And, because of money laundering and anti-terrorism laws, it is increasingly difficult for short-term residents to open such an account in Britain—you may be going home before the account is actually open. Most faculty members have their pay checks deposited directly into their personal accounts in their US bank. This latter approach, plus use of an ATM card in England drawing from the American account, is safe and reliable.

Credit Cards

The two most accepted credit cards are MasterCard and Visa. The Harlaxton Boutique accepts both, as do nearly all other stores in Britain and Europe (American Express and Diners Card are not as widely accepted). Look for acceptance signs on the door, on a shelf inside or on the cash register (or "till") itself. If you do not see any of these signs, always ask. Stores usually have a £5 minimum spending limit before they will accept a credit card. This is true of Harlaxton's Boutique as well.

Our Business Office offers cash withdrawals against a credit card for a small handling fee.

Be sure that you sign the back of your credit cards. The British storekeepers do compare the signatures to make sure they match.

Change

There is a change machine (for British coins and notes only) in the Manor house, just outside the Junior Common Room and Harlaxton Boutique, first floor, and in the Carriage House laundry room.

It is also possible to get change from the Business Office and the Harlaxton Boutique.

Office Space

Faculty Offices

The Visiting (American) Faculty Office is located adjacent to the Library and British Faculty Office. This office provides total wireless access, telephone access, networked computers, space to work on your own

laptop, and access to printers/photocopiers in an adjoining area or in the Library close by.

We urge you to bring your own laptop computer, and faculty accommodations have wireless connectivity as well as network points. It is therefore convenient for you to work in your personal rooms, or—because of the total wireless access in Harlaxton buildings and close-in grounds—anywhere in the Manor.

Our IT Technician will set up your laptop for Harlaxton use on the day you arrive, thereby missing the student rush for the same service. This step will ensure you have no connectivity problems at Harlaxton and that our firewall does not block your access to off-campus resources such as e-mail or academic files.

Additional laptop computers for classroom presentations are available for loan from the Library.

The Senior Common Room (Van Der Elst Room) on the 300 level of the Manor offers a spacious, relaxed atmosphere for faculty reading and other work. It does not contain computers, by design, to protect its ambience, but you may use your laptop there. Only faculty members and their families are admitted to this room.

Faculty may meet with students in a seminar room near the Visiting (American) Faculty Office or in other areas of the College.

Supplies and Services

Supplies are generally more limited at Harlaxton than at the home campus, but the Programme Coordinator will provide paper, pens, transparencies etc., as needed. If there are special or specific office

products that you like to use, you may want to bring them with you (example: tablet paper used in Britain is longer and narrower than it is in the States, so binders--two-ring in Britain, not three-ring—and standard U.S. folders will not be compatible; or, if you are preparing disks of materials to print in England, make the margins slightly narrower than for 8 ½ x 11" paper). Several places in Grantham—e.g. W.H. Smith, Wilkinson's—sell folders and other supplies.

If needed, the Programme Coordinator will assist you with school-related tasks. Her office is in the Library area.

Faculty mailboxes (for personal mail as well as school-related materials and messages) are located in the Reception area.

Telephones and Faxes

Bedrooms

Each faculty living space has telephone and internet access. This may sound "normal," but in fact faculty members in the past have had no telephone unless they rented it! Faculty will be billed for applicable call charges, which in Britain apply to local as well as long distance and international calls. Calls are very cheap on the College telephone system, including to the United States.

Your phone will dial all local, national, and international destinations. Each phone has its own telephone number, so your callers can reach you (or leave a message) without having to go through the College switchboard. Also, if you have organized a special rate calling plan, as long as it has an access number from the UK with an '0800' or '0808' (free call) prefix, you will be able to gain access to it from this phone at no charge.

Faculty Office

The Faculty Office has telephone service for school-related business calls within the UK, and business-related calls are paid by the College.

Pay Phones

Several pay telephones are located throughout the College buildings.

Cellular (“Mobile”) Phones

A recent Harlaxton faculty member suggests you might like to buy a cellular phone for use while in England, particularly whilst traveling. This is a convenient though not inexpensive option. Since these costs change frequently, you are advised to check on the options once you arrive in England. The signal is not good in every part of the Manor for these “mobile” phones, and so you may have to step outside to use your cell phone.

Fax Machine

A fax machine available for personal and school use is located in the College Secretary’s office. Faxes received will be placed in your mailbox.

Living Facilities and Services

Accommodations

Harlaxton faculty accommodations are either in the Manor House or in the Carriage House, the latter located down a quiet lane from the main house. Normally, single faculty or couples live in the Manor—though when demands for family space are high, some children are housed in Manor rooms. These rooms are large and attractive. All rooms contain a sink and a few of the rooms contain a bathtub or shower and toilet.

Shared bathrooms are located nearby on the corridor. An electric kettle for making tea, coffee, or hot chocolate is available; cooking facilities are not. A microwave and coffee maker are in the Senior Common Room (Van der Elst Room), with the "Faculty Fridge" nearby. The rooms can be cool and somewhat drafty at times, so you might want a heavy bathrobe or favorite sweater for late night reading or lessons.

In the Carriage House are two flats to accommodate families. These flats, nicely refurbished, have two bedrooms and small but attractive kitchen facilities. And in the Manor itself is yet another flat for families with one or two children, done to a good standard, also with kitchen facilities (though we find that not many families wish to cook while at the Manor—food is available at each mealtime in our Refectory, and someone else does the cooking and the "washing up").

Note: Whether in the Manor or the flats, you have to turn on the electric power at every switch plate. The switches, incidentally, work in the opposite direction of American: up for off and down for on. Also, and even more important, British current is at 220 volts. American current can shock you; British current can kill you.

Harlaxton Manor and the Carriage House are old buildings—170 years old. But they are kept well. And there is a hidden plus: the Harlaxton staff will do all we can to make your life here as comfortable as possible. You will find the men and women who provide such support to be helpful and friendly. As they say, "Don't hesitate to ask."

As a semester resident, however, you are fully responsible for the care and cleaning of your living quarters. Our Housekeeping Team are wonderfully helpful people, but their responsibilities are to the public

areas of the Manor, and it would be unfair if you were to ask them—as, incredibly, some faculty members have done in the past—to take care of your personal cleaning. It is also a matter of fairness and consideration for others that you leave your room as clean as you find it.

If you need a repair (anything from a leaking roof to a broken light), add your name and the nature of the problem to the fix-it list posted on the bulletin board in the Manor, first floor, near the elevator. These receive daily response during the week. If the situation is an emergency, ask the person in Reception to assist you in finding the appropriate staff member immediately.

We ask you to arrive for residence on the stated date and not before, though we are happy to receive luggage and store it for you at your risk. We also have only the most limited of capabilities to house faculty members after the term ends. The Principal will help you make any exceptional arrangements.

Visitors

All visitors, including family members or friends who are visiting or staying in a faculty member's room or flat, must be pre-booked. Immediate family members are welcome in an empty bed in your room (but not with the addition of “cots” or rollaways, and not to sleep on the floor) with only a daily meal charge, or in our few Manor guest rooms (when available) at one-half the normal rate. Friends or extended family pay full rates, which are good value compared with area hotels and guest houses. If there is not room in the Manor, we can help you locate a suitable hotel or B & B nearby.

The Principal takes a personal interest in faculty and faculty guests and wishes to assist you in making your arrangements.

Household Supplies and Services

The College supplies, on your arrival, bed linens, towels, and washcloths (not easy, for washcloths are an American thing—called “flannels” in Britain). You are responsible for laundering these items through the semester.

[Perhaps this is a good point to observe that whereas we want to help you in every possible way, we are not staffed to be a hotel or to provide hotel services. We therefore encourage you to look on your Manor lodgings as your *home* while you are here, a home which you take care of, and not as a commercial hotel with a staff to serve you. This is a delicate balance, for we do want to help in every way we can, and we do understand that it is not easy for you to be uprooted and to live in strange quarters for a period of four months. But more often than you would think, people in the past have taped or tacked things to the lovely walls of the state bedrooms—leaving torn places or a greasy-smudgy residue that you can’t really get off, or cleaned mud from and applied polish to shoes with College towels, or let drains get clogged with hair or stuff, or marred newly-refinished surfaces with wet clothes/cloths or hot coffee cups, or asked our housekeepers to be personal servants, or asked our young student development staff to become personal travel agents—you know—treated the Manor and its helpful folk in destructive, thoughtless, or demanding ways. We promise to do our best to serve you and make your time productive and pleasant. We simply ask you to be thoughtful and considerate of this place and these people who are here to serve.]

Maybe I am protesting too much (this is Gordon, the Principal, writing). But consider that we had a special free laundry for faculty members installed the year we arrived, as some Harlaxton faculty veterans will remember. But, alas, each semester some persons broke washer or dryer or both by carelessness or haste, sometimes more than once, until finally we are no longer able to provide this service for our visiting faculty. Two commercial-style laundries are available to meet your needs, one in the Manor House and one in the Carriage House. British pound coins operate washers and dryers.

You might want to bring a laundry bag, or you can buy a plastic basket in town. Necessities may be purchased in the supermarkets in Grantham, as can laundry and hand soaps, fabric softeners, etc. The College mini-bus stops at the Grantham Bus Plaza, next to the enclosed Isaac Newton Shopping Center and the very large Morrison's super market. Other well-stocked supermarkets are J. Sainsbury's and a large ASDA (owned by Wal-Mart). The latter are farther from the mini-bus stop and therefore more difficult if you are laden with shopping bags, but they have good selections. If you get lonely for a Wal-Mart greeter, visit ASDA.

The House Team cleans the public areas of the Manor, and—again—you are responsible for cleaning your own living quarters. Our House Manager will help with information and supplies—her telephone extension is 302. Vacuum cleaners ("Hoovers") are available near your rooms. Basic cleaning supplies are in your rooms. You may empty your trash ("rubbish") in the recycling and general receptacles ("bins") provided, or there is a pickup once a week—you place your waste basket outside your door and the "rubbish" is collected.

Personal Supplies and Services

Photography. All computers in the Visiting Faculty Office have CD burners. If you should be using film in creating your photographic art, there are several photo shops in Grantham which provide good service.

Many **hair salons and barbers** offer their services in Grantham. Ask staff or former faculty for their recommendations, since these establishments change from year to year.

Most **cosmetics** used by Americans, or equivalents thereof, are available in the supermarkets or at “Boots, the Chemist” on the High Street.

Note that **American hair dryers, curling irons and other small appliances cannot be used in Britain without an electrical current transformer (converter) AND adaptor plug.** These converters and adaptors—they are different things--can be bought in the States—try Wal-Mart or Radio Shack or Sharper Image or any major department store. **But you will probably want to buy small British appliances once you are here or collect some left behind by faculty and students of the previous term. It is less hassle.** These pre-owned appliances are available when you first arrive, near the Student Development Office.

Shopping in Grantham

You can take the College shuttle bus for shopping in Grantham, and from there you can take the train to Nottingham or Peterborough (or London) for larger selections of just about anything.

Americans often find shopping in Britain difficult: the range of choices is often much narrower, stocks are not plentiful, you often have to go to several shops to find the item you want, the ideal of courteous and helpful service is not well advanced, and prices are higher than those in the United States. Except for these factors, shopping is pleasant enough—consider it a cross-cultural adventure! And the charity shops in Grantham are numerous and well-stocked.

There is an **historic open-air market** in Grantham on Saturday mornings, in the Market Place—it has been going on for more than 1,000 years!

Kids in the Schools

Schools in Harlaxton and Grantham serve Visiting Faculty's children and provide a wonderful education—the kids' own "British experience." Changes in British immigration laws have made a distinction between Visiting Faculty with children in tax-supported schools and those not availing themselves of such schools. A separate visa and visa charge are required for each family member in the former instance. The University of Evansville's Director of Study Abroad/Harlaxton and Harlaxton's Vice Principal for Business and Technology Services will guide you through immigration requirements.

Transportation for the children is available for those attending schools in Grantham (secondary ages 11 - 18), the bus stop being about a mile away. Children attending primary school in Harlaxton Village, if too young to walk on their own, are accompanied by their parents—that distance is also about a mile. School hours in Harlaxton village are 9 a.m. until 3:30 p.m.

The College Secretary provides initial contact between the schools and the parents. She will need to know the ages and U.S. grade levels of the children well in advance of your arrival in Britain and will require a school transcript. The University of Evansville will ask for this and other pertinent family information as part of your "processing."

All children attending British schools must wear a uniform; and even to children accustomed to parochial school uniforms, British uniforms may appear more formal. At the secondary school level, sport jackets, white shirts, ties and dress shoes are common for male students; skirts, blouses, sport jackets and opaque stockings are common for female students at secondary level. School uniforms are always in dark colors. For boys, black pants, shoes and socks are best. King's School also has required indoor and outdoor PE kits that can be purchased in Grantham.

The King's School in Grantham rents sports jackets, but if your son has a black jacket or has a large build, you should bring his jacket along. Children at Harlaxton Village School wear dark pants or skirts and a red sweatshirt with the school logo on it. The sweatshirt is purchased at the school and is reasonably priced. Usually, a white shirt is worn under the sweatshirt, and children seem to be somewhat flexible here. Jeans and athletic shoes (trainers) are not worn in British schools.

Another essential item for school is a backpack, both for books and for carrying lunch. The College catering staff will prepare sack lunches, available at breakfast, for your children. You will make these arrangements at the start of the term. There is no choice of sandwich fillings, so children should not expect the range of options available at home.

Your children may have to prepare for academic adjustments. At the secondary level (college prep), British students are generally advanced one to two years when compared to the American students. For example, an eighth grader in Britain would be taking geometry rather than a first course in algebra. Some courses are necessarily different, such as British history, and American students will not come with the background expected of British peers. On the other hand, American students will know much more about the Colonies. A good discussion with the headmaster or headmistress will help to sort out appropriate courses for your children. Elementary students will not find the curriculum radically different.

Nurse and Doctor

The College Nurse is available mornings, Monday through Thursday, at the College Infirmary. The Nurse can dispense cold and cough medicines, aspirin and other non-prescription remedies. She can also advise you on the need for a physician and will call the doctor's surgery (general practitioner's office) to make an appointment for you.

Faculty members and their families pay a per person medical fee at the beginning of term, which covers services of the doctor and nurse for the entire sixteen-week semester. Since private-pay individual visits to a physician cost at least 75 British pounds, the Harlaxton fee is most reasonable and is a great security. Please note that this service by the doctor is provided for "self-limiting new conditions. Where a faculty member has a pre-existing medical condition, or if a chronic disease develops which requires regular care, these conditions will be excluded and a consultation fee per appointment will be charged."

Our College Physician is normally in the infirmary early Tuesday mornings ("early" in Britain is 8:30-ish). She will also see persons on the required Harlaxton Medical Plan in her surgery (office) without additional cost. The doctor's office is about four miles from Harlaxton Manor. Transportation is normally by taxi, at the patient's expense.

There is a charge for prescriptions, which is up to 10 British pounds for each medication. Please note that antibiotics are not prescribed with the same frequency as they are in the U.S. If you are susceptible to upper respiratory or urinary infections, you may wish to bring antibiotics with you.

If the Nurse is not available, you may call the Student Development Office or our Reception/Security and Assistance Staff for help. They will assist you in any medical issue, including a dental problem.

You will want to review your own health insurance policy to determine what reimbursement you may receive for medical services tendered to you in Britain and what processes you should follow.

Emergencies are treated at the "A & E," the Accident and Emergency Centre at Grantham and District Hospital, a 212-bed facility located ten to twenty minutes away from Harlaxton (the time depending on traffic). Transportation is by taxi unless you are too ill. In that case, a member of staff can drive you, or in a serious emergency an ambulance can be called. Charges are billed to you, and then your own health insurance reimburses you. Serious emergencies may require treatment in Nottingham or Lincoln or Boston, each an hour or so away.

Medicine

All over-the-counter drugs should be brought with you to ensure that, in case of illness, you and your family will be comfortable and easily "medicated." For children, it is especially critical to bring the medication they are accustomed to, as strength and flavors differ here. British kids grow up with "blackcurrant," but for American kids it is an acquired taste! If necessary, most cold remedies can be purchased in town at "Boots the Chemist" (drug store) or a super market. If you take a prescription medicine, bring an adequate supply with you. British drugs are sometimes named or manufactured differently from those in the States.

If you receive allergy shots, you should be aware that these will not be given by doctors or nurses in Britain. British doctors believe that anti-allergy injections are dangerous. With this in mind, it will be important for you to see what can be worked out with our College Physician. We will help make the contact for you.

For diabetics, syringes and insulin can be bought only with a prescription. You need either to bring both with you or obtain a prescription from a British doctor. Storage of insulin can be easily handled once here. Write in advance and let us know your needs.

Sports Hall and Recreational Facilities

Harlaxton offers sports facilities with multi-hour access for both students and faculty. The Sports Hall (read "gymnasium") offers an excellent fitness center and full courts for indoor sports. Sports "pitches" (read "fields") accommodate outdoor activities. The facilities have equipment for football, soccer, volleyball, ping-pong, basketball, badminton, floor hockey, and rugby. Rural lanes and a canal tow-path

in the surrounding countryside are marvelous for jogging as well as biking. The College maintains a stable of bikes for your use. The Sports Hall also has locker room accommodations that may be used for changing and showering before and after your sporting events or workout. Faculty members are welcome to participate on the soon-to-be-world-famous Harlaxton Lions sports teams, and students vs. faculty events are a popular feature of Harlaxton life.

Airport Pickup and Return

We will pick you up at Heathrow Airport and bring you to Harlaxton Manor at no charge on the Wednesday of your arrival, provided you arrive at Heathrow by 10:00 am. It is best to book your flight directly into Heathrow, of course; if this is not possible, there is also a bus service from Gatwick to Heathrow. Information is on the web.

You may return to Heathrow on the student buses at end of term.

Shuttle for Shopping, Travel, and Church

Harlaxton College offers a shuttle service to and from Grantham throughout the day, Monday through Saturday. Shuttles begin running at about 8 a.m. and stop running about 5:30 p.m. Sunday morning, the shuttle service is to and from area churches—Catholic, Baptist, Methodist, Reformed, Anglican, Interdenominational—on a set schedule based on sign-ups the previous Friday. Those wishing to attend an Anglican service might also walk to Harlaxton Village Church. The shuttle service is greatly reduced on weekends when students are away on trips.

There is a required charge for use of the shuttle, a reasonable per person fee that does not begin to cover Harlaxton's cost in providing

the minibuses and drivers. We ask each faculty member and family to pay this even if you have a car, for we have found that most faculty members with cars still rely on the shuttle service and are glad to have the service available—parking in Grantham, or any British town or city, is maddening!

Special transportation is arranged for special College-related events such as field trips, library research, or sports “matches.”

Taxi Service

Several taxi services can be booked for travel between Harlaxton and Grantham. Harlaxton has a special arrangement with Street Cars (01476 590 008) for a flat rate of 6 British pounds (9 British pounds after 10:00 pm or on Sundays) between Grantham and Harlaxton Manor. The maximum number of people per taxi is usually four. If you arrive at the train station and take the first available taxi, fares are usually higher—sometimes 50% higher. To save a few pounds, call the taxi company in advance or when you arrive.

Grantham Taxi (01476 594 594) offers 24 hour service and matches Street Cars rates.

Unlike in the United States, it's always a good idea to have your taxi booked in advance if you are catching a train or arriving on a train. Taxis are fairly busy at peak times, especially if the weather is bad.

Entertainment

In addition to pubs in the area, Grantham has several places of interest for varied age groups. These are as follows:

Guildhall Centre, St. Peter's Hill, Telephone: 593966

Paragon Cinema, St. Catherine's Road, Telephone: 570046

Pubs

The Gregory, Harlaxton Village – excellent food

The Tollemache Inn, 17 St. Peter's Hill – a family place

The Welby Arms, Denton – next village west.

Chequers Inn, Woolsthorpe-by-Belvoir – two villages away, and outstanding food!

Evening events require a taxi, except to the Gregory at the top of our lane. You can walk—or run.

Television and Videos

The Senior Common Room (Van der Elst Room) has a television set, DVD, and VCR. Programme listings are available in the daily newspapers. Videotapes and DVDs are available from the Library and from the Student Development Office.

A cable TV feed serves the Senior Common Room, Junior Common Room, Pearson Room, and Bistro. There is, thanks be to God, a North American sports channel on this hook-up. British television seems “different” to Americans (and vice versa, of course)—again, an acquired taste.

Theatres

Grantham-Paragon has two cinema screens, but movies have short runs. If you want to see a film, don't wait, and don't blink.

Nottingham has two large cinema complexes in the city centre, showing a good variety of first run films (though a bit later than in U.S.). The continuous schedule, coupled with a consistent train service

between Grantham and Nottingham, allows for easy access. Prices are similar to U.S. regular prices.

But, why go to the movies when legitimate theatre abounds in Britain, in towns all around us, in Stratford an hour and a half away, in London an hour away. It's your big chance to see some of the best legitimate theatre on planet Earth!

Mail Service

Harlaxton Village has a nice little post office in the village shop, and the Grantham Post Office on the High Street is a major operation. If you plan on using the Grantham Post Office, allow enough time for the lines ("queues"). The Post Office provides services such as dispensing Social Security payments, accepting bill payments, etc.; consequently, it can be very busy. For any package (even a large manila envelope) going to the United States or abroad, you will need a customs declaration slip. The Post Office will provide it.

You may want to advise family and friends to take care when filling in the customs forms attached to packages by the US Post Office. If the package is a gift, the kind givers back home have been known to inflate the value on the sticker so that the gift is more generously appreciated. It is Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs who appreciate it most, however, for they often slap on charges for customs and VAT (Value Added Tax), detaining the package until the fees are paid. And s, for example, if "used personal clothing" is being shipped, it should be so marked and with a minimal value marked on the form. If something has "no commercial value," such should be noted. An example: a "traveling" recognition plaque was sent from our home university for one of our staff members, who was pleased with the

honor and allowed to keep the plaque for a month. Because the office sending it had put a generous value on the plaque—which already had nameplates for many monthly honorees on it and had absolutely no commercial value—we had to pay \$80 in taxes and customs duties to get it out of the clutches of Her Majesty’s R&C. Not an uncommon kind of experience.

Mailing costs are generally more expensive than for comparable service in America. Airmail letters usually take between four to ten days to reach their U.S. destination and may be delayed around holidays on both sides of the Atlantic.

A letter drop outside the Reception Office provides very efficient outgoing mail service for letters already stamped.

And of course, the College provides e-mail access.

Note: It is often cheaper to pay the airline for an extra bag than to mail things to and from Harlaxton from the United States.

Travel Tidbits

If student bookings leave some spaces, you are welcome to sign up for College-sponsored trips. They are interesting, convenient, well-priced, and they go to major British locations. **But they are also student trips, with student companions, staying in student hotels and hostels.**

Day Trips. Adults pay normal price and kids go free, except for any admissions charges.

Weekend Trips without Children. As noted on the web page (www.harlaxton.ac.uk.uk/travel/guidelinesfaculty.htm), faculty

members and spouses/partners pay normal price plus any additional costs incurred by meeting special room requests (e.g., single rooms or having Brad Pitt as roommate). ***Weekend Trips with Children.*** This is more complex, for we sometimes can get discounts for children but on a case by case basis. If a family is interested in a trip, we advise that they speak with our Student Development staff as early as possible and let them know. They can then see what price is possible, and you can decide if you want to go. Typically, adults pay the same rate as students and children pay any additional accommodation costs, if any.

Accommodations are standard tourist class hotels and hostels and are comfortable enough, though not lavish. Travel is primarily by coach (bus).

The Student Development Office has a collection of travel guides left by departing students and faculty, housed along with travel-dedicated computers in The Suzy Lantz Travel Library; the main College Library, too, has a selection of guide books: Eyewitness, Blue Guides, and Michelin Green.

British travel agencies are mainly sellers of packaged holidays and do not cater for individual journeys in the same ways American agencies do. Unless you buy a packaged trip, you will have to make your own hotel arrangements (both search them out and call/write/fax). The agencies have many publications advertising travel packages within Britain, Europe, Africa, etc., and often for very good value.

Rail schedules are available at train stations and at National Rail Enquiries, 08457 484 950, **www.eastcoast.co.uk**, or **www.thetrainline.com**. Ticket prices, much as airline prices in the

United States, vary greatly with time of purchase and time and day of travel—you are usually better off to buy in advance.

Faculty with children under 16 can get a family pass/ticket, which reduces prices considerably. You pay a fee for the card, but the savings per ticket more than make up for the initial card fee. Faculty without children have no fare breaks, unless you are over sixty, in which case you can purchase a Senior Railcard that gives discounts of one-third on any ticket.

Rail Rover packages allow regional travel at good prices. Apex fares (booked and paid for in advance for a specific train/ time/date - at least a week in advance of travel) are available to certain destinations, Edinburgh being the most likely from Grantham.

A one-way ticket (called a "single") will sometimes cost nearly as much as a round trip (called a "return"); conversely, sometimes two "singles" are more economical than a "return." Your best friend is **www.thetrainline.com** or **www.eastcoast.co.uk**.

If you are traveling to London, you can buy your subway ("Underground" or "Tube") ticket when you buy the rail ticket. You need only tell the ticket agent that you also want a Tube ticket. Rail tickets may be charged on any major credit card. The agent will ask you how many London zones you want covered by your Tube ticket—usually you need zones 1-2 only, unless you are going farther afield to places like Kew Gardens or Heathrow Airport. If you go to London often, an "Oyster Card" is a good purchase, giving maximum convenience and cheapest fares. Oyster Cards may be purchased at London Underground stations or on line at **<https://oyster.tfl.gov.uk>**.

If you are a single traveler and plan a great deal of rail travel in Great Britain, you might investigate a BritRail Pass or Flexipass - available only in the United States. However, for families with children, a Britrail Pass may be more expensive than using the regular family card.

Gifts

When you return to the States, you will fill out a customs card listing your purchases (gifts, etc.) and their value. When you buy these special items, keep the sales slips separate. In the event you are asked about them, you can easily show the sales slips and avoid any questions or excessive value/charges. If you can do it, pack these items together. Few people ever reach their allocated duty free limit, or for that matter, are asked about their list. However, it is easier to be prepared than be delayed at your port of U.S. entry.

Shipping boxes to the States is very expensive. It is often easier to pay for an extra bag on the airplane than to ship. Every semester, some faculty member asks us to pack and mail his/her goods, academic and/or other. Though our staff is very helpful and willing to be of service, Harlaxton cannot pack your boxes, pay your postage, or ship your goods for you.

Again, if you have questions, "do not hesitate to ask." The Harlaxton Experience is a great adventure. It has its stresses, every day. But the journeys of body, mind, and spirit are well worth it!

“Blessed Harlaxton, My Home”

is the name of a song written by our wonderful choirmaster, Prof. Sally Brown. Many of us learn to feel exactly that: Harlaxton is our Home, and the place is truly “Blessed Harlaxton.” May your days here be some of the best in your life.

Let us help!