

Katherine Christie Evans HISS 2016 Review

This August I was lucky enough to leave London behind me in a cloud of grey smoke, and the landscape through the train window gradually became greener and greener as we sped North towards Yorkshire.

Scarborough proved a wonderful setting for the Historically Informed Summer School. Despite a busy schedule of music workshops, I still found time to explore this attractive Victorian seaside town, with its steep hills and promenades.

What I was most anticipating was a much-needed break from life and its pressures, to focus on music. My hopes were more than fulfilled in this respect, as upon arrival I was handed a jam-packed schedule to peruse, and then shown to my very comfortable room, which functioned for the next week as a peaceful space for studying, sleeping, and reflecting on the experiences of the day.

HISS attendees were spoiled with a fantastic selection of workshops. Indeed, I found it difficult to choose between the classes on offer each day.

Being a newcomer to HISS, I might have worried that I'd be the odd one out but long-term attendees were very welcoming, and furthermore I soon discovered that I was not the only first-timer.

HISS provides the perfect platform for a wonderful variety of personalities to meet, mingle, and share a love of music. I met a diverse range of people and there was a wonderfully broad age range.

As a singer I had very much hoped to discover new Early Music and Folksong repertoire, as well as meet like-minded musicians, and I found I had come to the right place.

Some highlights for me included Susannah Pell's "Try a Viol" session, where I had a wonderful chance to hold and play (albeit very poorly!) an instrument I had never thought to try. On that note, HISS was a great place to glimpse some extraordinary instruments, and open one's ears to new sounds. I also took great pleasure in the Musical Banquet, which was an informal chance for impromptu ensembles and soloists to showcase anything they fancied, to a kindly and accepting audience much distracted by a three-course meal!

I began each morning with a walk down to the sea, with splendid views towards the castle. If I had the energy after a day of workshops, I could retire to the bar in the evening where I would find a lively session of folk tunes in full swing.

From Scarborough I travelled on to "Medieval Music in the Dales" festival in the Yorkshire Dales, where I bumped into some fellow HISS participants! I have returned to London feeling refreshed and feeling inspired to learn new music.

My sincere thanks to Graham and Sammi for having me at HISS 2016. I wouldn't have been able to attend had it not been for the generous bursary, which gave me the opportunity to acquaint myself with lovely new people and music!