



Poland Diary 2011

Day 2 Part 2 - Friday

Dear Parents,

After leaving a very emotional morning at Auschwitz-Birkenau we continued our journey of discovering what really happened in the disastrous years of the Holocaust. Upon approaching Auschwitz 1 (recently turned into a museum) we were still pretty apprehensive. After seeing many famous landmarks at Auschwitz-Birkenau the trip to Auschwitz 1 was no different. Whilst walking with our heads held high, feeling proud we looked up to see the very famous sign *Arbeit Macht Frei* translated in English as 'Work sets you free', we discussed the meaning behind this and then continued on through the cobbled pathways. We then began our tour in the museum where we were greeted with a shocking sight of two tons of human hair, behind a thin sheet of glass.

This was really shocking to all of us (especially the girls who value every inch of their hair!). Looking at the two colours of hair which were evidently different, we wondered why there was this difference.

This question, which we pondered over, was answered when we were told that the grey matted hair, in contrast to the blonde and brown hair in good condition, had been a result of the effect of the toxic fumes of the gas chambers. Continuing on, things certainly didn't get any less shocking, looking at people's belongings such as tiny baby clothes, round, square and every other type of glasses was moving. Finally we saw the thousands of piles of shoes ranging from small to large, with every pair representing one lost life.

Leaving another dreary, yet technical, building we came to a halt at building number 10, we all began to wonder why we had stopped at another museum buildings, why was this one so special? When Sara stood up and all of us joined her in a circle, she began telling us about the horrors of Mengele's revolting and inhumane experiments. Everyone was so overcome with emotion; it really was a terrible shock. We then proceeded in moving on and led a ceremony in the courtyard, ignoring the request to not be so loud we repeated the song *Am Yisrael chai* several times, gradually getting louder each time. We concluded the ceremony by singing the *Hatikvah*. It really meant a lot for us to all be together, as one. Rabbi Riffkin spoke some wise words of wisdom and with that we got on the coach and started our Shabbat preparation.

Speak to you soon, lots of love
Emma Gold and Lauren Simon xx