

Cologne and Gimborn, Germany
March 2011

This trip simply exceeded my expectations! Upon being selected as the 2010 Gimborn Scholarship recipient by the IPA and OACP, I knew I wanted to take full advantage of this once-in-a-lifetime experience. I quickly got in touch with Johannes Holl in Cologne who graciously agreed to host me in his home for the week prior to my visit to the Gimborn Castle IPA Training centre. Without asking, he quickly began organizing events and visits in and around Cologne.

Upon my arrival at the Cologne Airport on March 7th, Johannes picked me up and we headed straight to downtown Cologne. As luck would have it, it was 'Rose Monday' which is the day that Cologne hosts the largest festival/parade celebration in Europe, if not the world. With 1.5 million parade spectators lining the streets which wind around the Cologne Cathedral, this was a parade and celebration like no other. Suffice to say, you just have to be there because words don't really do it justice. Johannes was able to get us into the actual parade and we walked in and about some of the spectacular floats. My first impression of Cologne was definitely an atypical one! After touring the parade route, we met up with other IPA members at the dedicated IPA - Koln section along the parade route. After meeting other international IPA members like Manfred and Gunter, it was time to head home and get a little rest. After arriving at Johannes' home and meeting his family, I settled in and was presented with a genuine North Rhine-Westphalia Police uniform and tie.

On Tuesday, Johannes took me on a walking tour of the town where he and his family live, Troisdorf. Johannes has a wealth of knowledge on the history of Germany as well as the culture. Being a history major in University, I appreciated all the insight he provided on everything from the architecture to the economy, and the churches to the important political figures. The master planned villages were fascinating and the history of the WWII battles in the area were also intriguing.

At night, I was graciously invited to a surprise 70th birthday party hosted by the Holls for their long-time composer friend Manfred Hilger. The 5-course meal and conversations will never be forgotten...and before I knew it, it was 2:30 in the morning!

The next day I was up for 5am and headed into 'work' with Johannes for a ride-along with his dayshift. I was given a tour of the Police station and sat in on 'parade' in their small dispatch room. After a brief parade it was

out with Jessica and David. I was able to witness how German police officers operate and how they deal with the routine calls as well as the not-so-routine calls! If there was one thing I noticed above all else it was both the driving skills of the Police officers as well as those of the citizens in Cologne. Everyone moved over and parted the way whenever we were going to an emergency call...even if we had to drive into on-coming traffic. It was a sight to see and at no point did I even feel a slight sense of nervousness. Throughout the day I was able to observe the Police in action dealing with such things as an industrial accident where a victim broke his leg at a construction site, several traffic accidents, a break and enter, a house fire where the local media showed up and began filming. The dayshift ended when we were able to surround a townhouse and caught two 11 year old boys inside stealing property.

The officers who I rode with were more than helpful in answering any questions I had and the discussions we made about the different policing styles and philosophies was definitely an eye-opener for me...as well as them! There may be slightly different philosophies and approaches to policing but there is definitely a common thread and bond between police officers about why were entered this profession.

After this shift, Johannes took me on a tour of Cologne where he showed me where the Cologne archive building collapsed on May 4th 2009 where he was the incident commander. Relics from Cologne's history were destroyed in this tragic event and miraculously only 2 people died. Relics as old as 1100 years were destroyed and sight is still being excavated to this day. It was then off to the magnificent Cologne Cathedral where I had a personal tour. Needless to say, seeing this Cathedral and learning about it's history was one of the highlights of my trip.

On Thursday, Johannes took me on another more detailed tour of downtown Cologne and we walked around the various churches, cathedrals, shops, and historic sites. We ventured across the Rhine and went up a 40 storey building which gave a breathtaking birds-eye view of the Cathedral and downtown Cologne. A definitely must for anybody travelling to Cologne! While on this roof-top observation deck I was able to film an Air Ambulance helicopter landing at the base of building to deal with an emergency. Watching all the Police cruisers coming in from various locations and setting up roadblocks and closing intersections was an interesting sight from a visual perspective most people don't get to see!

In the afternoon it was back into the station for my second ride-along

with Rabea and Machalle. During this shift, I was able to tour the central lock-up facility, the Communications room, and the Special Services building. Everyone was so helpful in explaining how things operated and again, I'll be able to use that knowledge throughout the rest of my policing career.

On Friday morning, Johannes took me to the German Police University in Cologne where he teaches one course in English to the new police recruits. Unlike in Canada, all German police recruits are required to take a 3 year University degree program in order to become a police officer. There were about 25 students in the class and I was asked to give a lecture on 'Policing in Canada'. The students were very inquisitive and asked lots of questions throughout the class. During the last half of the morning we did some role-playing and scenarios in English which was the highlight of the day! It was then off to the second class where I gave a second lecture on the same topic. Many of the same questions were asked and there was a genuine interest in the topic from all the students. What struck me at the Police University was the gender make-up of the new recruits. Across the board, it was a 50/50 split between males and females and I learned there is no quota system. The selection process involves simply taking the best and brightest candidates.

After the lecturing it was off to another ride-along with Ellie and Maik. Another exciting shift where I learned about some of the problem areas around Cologne. I also learned about the way social services operates in the context of how parents become involved when their children get into trouble with the law. A great deal of leniency is given to young offenders and rehabilitation seems to be a prominent aspect of dealing with youth crime as opposed to incarceration and punishment.

On Sunday morning Johannes, Inspector Rob Davis of the Six Nations Police Service, and myself climbed Devil's Mountain. On our walk up we were able to see an old castle that was the inspiration for the architectural design of the Walt Disney World Castles in Orlando, FL and Anaheim, CA. One could definitely see the influences! When I said the castle does look like the Disney castle, Johannes was quick to correct me and say "No, the Disney castle looks like that castle". Johannes has been coming to Devil's Mountain all his life and the stories about his childhood memories were fascinating. Upon reaching the zenith where an old castle ruin lay, I was able to take in a gorgeous panoramic view of the Romantic Rhine, the Seven Mountains, and Cologne (off in the distance). The trek up was definitely worth it.

In the afternoon, we ventured off to Bonn where we were able to visit the birthplace of Ludwig Von Beethoven as well as Bonn University, which has some of the most beautiful buildings I've seen. Johannes was able to provide the history of many of the churches and cathedrals and seeing the remnants of the ancient Roman walls was another highlight.

At night, Johannes and his wife took Rob and I out for a traditional game of German bowling with a number of their friends. Again, this was a once-in-a-lifetime experience as these German bowling alleys are becoming extinct somewhat like the drive-in movie theatres in North America. German bowling consists of about a 40 foot lane where the lane starts out quite narrow and widens when approaching the pins. Nine-pins are used in a diamond shape and the actual bowling lane is bevelled and uneven so the balls wind and twist down the lane. Mastering how to throw the ball and knowing what the results will be takes a little getting used to say the least. I was a very entertaining evening and there were a number of fun games that could be played in teams and individually.

On Monday morning it was off to the Gimborn Castle IPA training centre. Johannes was able to settle me in smoothly and I stayed in an old schoolhouse across from the castle. The facilities were very comfortable, spacious, and tidy. After getting settled in, the week-long seminar "The Police Profession" started in the main conference hall. From day one, the hospitality showed by all participants was excellent and new friendships were made right away. After introducing a fellow classmate, I learned that there were police officers from various parts of the globe, including: Northern Ireland, Ireland, England, Cyprus, Norway, Denmark, Germany, Croatia, and Lithuania. I even learned that Frixos from Cyprus had lived in Mississauga for 7 years and got married at the Mississauga City Hall. Small world!

After our introductions and getting to know everyone a bit better, it was off to the pub for a few libations. Everybody came together and I must say the entire class gelled very well and many stories and laughs were had.

On Tuesday there were 2 lectures with subsequent discussions and the topics covered dealt with 'Promoting Advanced Communication Skills in Today's Police Training' and 'Context-Based Police profession - Consequences for Training and Education'. The one thing that made these lectures worthwhile were the openness and free discussions amongst the participants about the ways different police services throughout the world conduct their training and in-service education

programs. The lectures were very well structured and provided an international perspective on training and the importance of continual education throughout one's career.

On Wednesday, the internationalisation of Police training was discussed and the European approach was discussed. Being the only North American participants, the opinions and perspective Rob and I provided went over well with the rest of the class as many questions were directed towards us. Again, the discussions were both educational and entertaining! On Wednesday afternoon we all got on a bus and travelled to the Police training facility about one hour outside of Gimborn in the small town of Selm. The Director of this facility provided a private tour and we saw such things as the shooting ranges with their advanced technologies and computer-simulated scenario modules, the lecture halls, the mock Command Centre (which can double for a real Command Centre if the main one break down in the city!), the museum, the athletic facilities, and the driving course/facility. The facilities weren't unlike those at the Ontario Police College.

At night, the group went out to a traditional German restaurant in downtown Dortmund and then it was back to Gimborn.

On Thursday there was an interesting lecture by Paul Flodman from Lancaster University Law Department in England about the impact of the recession on the policing profession. It was interesting to learn about the disparities in wages between the various police agencies throughout the world.

The classes "Final Farewell" night was Thursday night and it didn't disappoint. It also happened to coincide with Renata's birthday so some had baked traditional German cakes and celebrations began. It was amazing how quickly we all bonded and there were many sing-alongs throughout the night as well! Shoulder patches, hats, pins, and t-shirts were all exchanged.

The staff at Gimborn were more than helpful and hospitable and the facilities, from the rooms to the conference hall, and from the restaurant to the Castle, made my visit comfortable and stress-free. There's no doubt that I'll be returning to Gimborn on a more frequent basis as the connections and friendships I made, the stuff I learned (both in and out of the classroom), and the facilities were phenomenal. The process of getting there, registering for the course, and the very affordable price really makes it an attractive adventure for any IPA member. Gimborn is an

exceptional facility and a unique policing experience. I highly recommend this trip to any IPA member who can afford the time to venture over to this historic and gorgeous part of Germany!

Many thanks to the Gimborn Scholarship Selection Committee (IPA and OACP members), Mr. Boyd Brown for putting me in touch with Johannes Holl and the many insightful conversations we had in preparation for my first trip to Germany, and the Holl family in Troisdorf, who without their warm hospitality and friendship, wouldn't have made this once-in-a-lifetime trip as memorable as it was.