



---

# A SWISS LIBRARIAN GOES TO WALES

---

My three months at the wonderful Gladstone's Library



Gladstone's Library, Church Lane, Hawarden, Flintshire CH5 3DF, UK

## Dear Travellers and Globetrotters ✈️🌍🔒

Welcome to my story about my adventure abroad and my time at Gladstone's Library!



Let me introduce myself: My name is Elena, I am nineteen and I finished my apprenticeship as a librarian (*Fachfrau Information und Dokumentation* as we call it in Switzerland) last summer. Right now I'm in Wales at the beautiful [Gladstone's Library](#) and I will spend the next three months working here.

If you're wondering how a librarian from Switzerland got here? I will explain it to you in the first two pages of this paper. I will also give you a little introduction about the project that led me here, about the library itself and its great founder William E. Gladstone.

After this introduction I will write a short report about my time here, the place itself and the work I had to do, so there should be about 15- 0 pages in the end. If you don't want to read all of the detail please go to the last page, where I will sum up everything I experienced shortly before I went home.

**Note:** To the lucky librarians, who are reading this and have the chance to work here after me: I'm really hoping this gives you a little *glimpse* how it will be when you get here. I will write a guide for you about the life at the library, the town it is in and about places you can/should visit in your free time. (please be cautious that some things may change and will not be the same when you arrive).

### **About the project *mobility-id*:**

What exactly is this project about? The project gives young librarians who finished their apprenticeship the chance to work abroad for three-four months. The years before some went to Greece or to Spain (because they spoke the language), but most of the placements are either in the UK or in Germany. This year I think there were about twelve people, half to the UK (Hawarden, Oxford, Glasgow, Bath, usw.) and the other half to Germany (mostly Berlin). The project supports you financially through this time, because you are not getting paid for your work for the library. For me it was more than enough money to pay for my room and the food, you also get money for your travel costs. You have to go abroad in the first year after your apprenticeship and you have to document your stay somehow, other than that you don't have to do anything for it. The project is supported by [Movetia](#).



The first time I heard of this project was, I think in the first or second year of my apprenticeship. The founder of the project Britta Biedermann visited us in class and told us about the mobility-project. She showed us different places where we could spend the three-four months, one of them was Gladstone's Library. I thought it sounded very nice and would be

really interesting to work in so special place. After her visit I didn't think much about the project until my last year. I wasn't sure what to do after my apprenticeship and decided to sign myself up for it. For a while I didn't hear anything back until the first interview request came in, I didn't get the placement in Oxford but I'm really glad about it because shortly after that Louisa Yates (the Director of Collections at the Gladstone's Library) said that she was interested in me and three other people. So I was preparing myself for the second skype interview for this project. I had the chance to do it at my work place and was quite nervous before it. After half of the interview I realised I already had the placement. Louisa just wanted to confirm if I'm okay with staying here because you have to live in the Library which is in a very small village, I will tell you more about that later.



It was arranged from the project that Louisa Yates (the one who was in charge of me) could come to Switzerland a few days. She came to Lucerne for one day during her stay, so I could meet here. We went to see the special collection of our canton library and went to lunch with my mother and my boss at the time. It was really nice and I could ask her a lot of questions. I was really lucky that I could meet her in person before I came here in January (but no worries if you don't have, they chance, everyone at the library is really lovely).

If you want to read more about it or about the experiences of other contestants and see some pictures have a look on the website: <https://www.mobility-id.ch/2019-2020/>

(Do you wonder why I know so much about W.E Gladstone and the history of the library? We had to do little Glimpses everyday who we told visitors about it. So, if you aren't interested in that skip to page 4)

### **Meet William E. Gladstone:**

William E. Gladstone was born 1809 in Liverpool and is the founder of the Gladstone's Library. He founded the Library in 1896, at this time the library was in another building than it is now. He was prime minister of the UK four times, leader of the Liberal party and a member of parliament for 62 years. He is still the longest serving prime minister in the history of the UK. His first premiership was in the 1860s and his last was in the 1890s, when he was in his eighties. He spoke five languages (Greek, Italian, Latin, French, and German). His father John Gladstone was a successful merchant and traded sugar, so the Gladstone Family had a big fortune. W. E. Gladstone was a passionate Christian, that is why the library has a big theology collection. He owned about 40,000 Books, around 32, 000 are now in Gladstone's Library. He wrote a diary since he was about 12 until shortly before his dead. In these diaries he noted all the books he read through his life, according to them he read about 22,000 Books. That's 300 Books a year or almost one book a day. He married Catherine Glynn and moved with her to her family home in Hawarden. Until today the family still lives in Hawarden Castle. He lived in Hawarden for about 40 years when he decided to build the library here. He thought that big cities like Oxford and London already had enough libraries and wanted to support the rural areas like Hawarden. His first library was a very small building, constructed of corrugated tin and iron, and looked like a Welsh Chapel or Tabernacle. Local people gave it the nickname, "Gladstone's Tin Tabernacle". He bought an

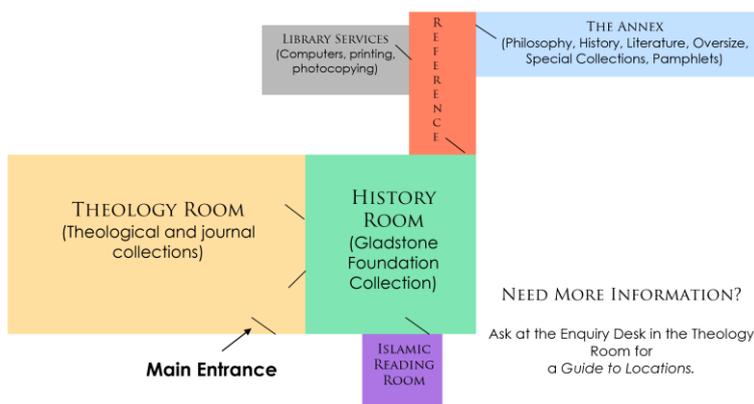
old grammar school building next to his library the “Tin Tabernacle” so people could stay there when they used the library. Until today the library is still a residential library. W.E Gladstone passed away in 1898 and was buried in Westminster Abbey.

### **Gladstone’s Library:**

So if you read the text above you know it is a residential library, people can come and stay for a few days or weeks if they want. The library has 26 rooms and is a bed & breakfast. Most of the rooms are ensuite (have a bathroom in it). The building you can see beneath was built in 1898, the reading rooms were finished in 1902 and the residential part in 1906. The residential part was built later because there wasn’t enough money at first. Through the selling of the biography of W.E. Gladstone the family could raise enough money to build the second part. Sadly W.E Gladstone died before the works on the building started, but the famous local architect John Douglas who designed the building had worked with W.E.G before on the Hawarden Castle and other buildings like the local churches before, so he know what W.E.G imagined. The library was built as national memorial, and was later to have inspired the American tradition of presidential libraries. It is the only prime ministerial library of the UK. The library has two reading rooms and the annex. The Theology Room contains the big theological collection and the enquiry desk. The History Room contains unlike the name not the history collection but the Gladstone Foundation Collection, all of the book which were owned by Gladstone himself. So, it’s like how his own “little” library looked like. The library still collects books and other items to four themes (theology and religion, humanities, literature and politics) which Gladstone collected (he collected in about 21 subjects) and has now about 130’000 items. The library has also a few archive collections.

The library is a charity so if you want to support this unique place, have a look at the website: <https://www.gladstoneslibrary.org/contact/support-gladstones-library/make-a-donation>

Map of the reading rooms:



## Pictures of the Reading Rooms:

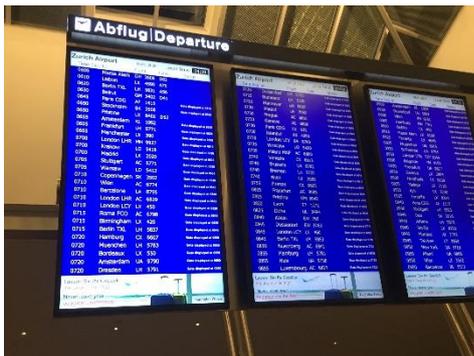


## Pictures of the building from outside:



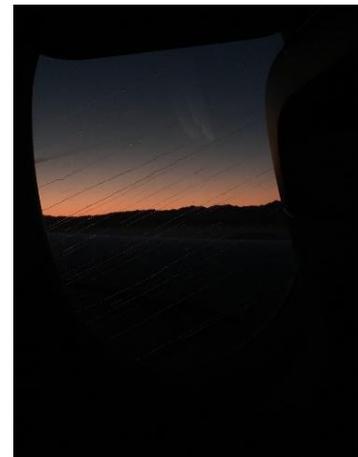
You can see it's not always rainy in the UK 😊

## My Journey to Wales and my Arrival at the Library



My journey to the Gladstone's Library started quite early. I had to fly to Manchester (you could also fly to Liverpool instead if you want) and from there I had to take the train to Chester (I had to change the train in Crewe) and from Chester I had to take the bus to Hawarden. The flight was about two hours and then it took another two hours until I was Hawarden itself. My flight from Zurich left at 06:55am, so I had to get up at 4am and my dad drove

me to the airport in Zurich. I think my flight was actually one of the first who left that day. Because the flight was so early it was rather cheap. I spoke to Louisa before and we decided that I would arrive at Monday 6<sup>th</sup> of February, because except the GWEs (Graduate Work Experience Trainees) no one works at the weekend and so when I arrive on Monday she could pick me up from Chester and we would take the bus to Hawarden together. Louisa sent me the travel details of the trains before and was



available on her phone after I landed in the case, I had questions about the journey or any problems finding something.

**Tip:** There is more than one way to travel by train from Manchester to Chester but you usually have to change at least once. See that you have enough time for the change and to find the platform with your luggage. You can buy a ticket (Anytime single from Manchester to Chester) at the Airport/Train station in Manchester for the whole journey where you can take any trains to you want Chester.

When I arrived in Chester Louisa waited there for me and we took the bus which took about 40 minutes. There is more than one bus line and it depends which one you take how long you have to Hawarden. The library building is near the bus stop where we had to get off. I had to check in and then I could go and unpack in my room and have lunch later that day. I didn't have to work on my first day which I was grateful for. I went out in the afternoon to see a little bit of Hawarden and they showed me around the building and also said where I had to be/when I had to start on Tuesday. One of the GWEs arrived on Sunday, Harry so we were both new, which was great because I wasn't the only one who had to get to know everything. I finished my day with dinner at the Library.

## Living, eating and sleeping at the Library



There are usually three GWEs (graduate work experience) working at the library. They all finish their education and want to work as archivists or librarians later, they stay up to three or six months and help the staff in the library. When I arrived, there were only two GWEs, Emily was there already for about three months and like I said Harry started on Sunday. The GWEs live in a flat in the library (four rooms and a bathroom which are behind a door. A chaplain also stays at the library for about a month and lives in the flat. So, I wasn't the only one living in the library, other than the GWEs I didn't have a room in the flat. I lived in a normal guest room on the first floor. The bed & breakfast has two floors with 26 bedrooms. Most of the rooms had a bathroom in it but mine didn't. So, I had to share a very nice bathroom down the corridor where my room was with the room next to me. Which wasn't a problem at all because I only had to share it with one or two people.

My room had a sink, a desk, a heater and a closet. It also had soap, towels, a hair dryer and a kettle tea and coffee bags. It was not big but enough and really cosy.

Sometimes it could get a little bit cold, I was lucky I was there in January to March and not in Winter but with the heater it was alright. I could see the backyard from my room, I was honestly glad about that because there is an old cemetery on the other side (it is beautiful to go there but I don't want to see it when I sleep). The



housekeeping changed the bed sheets and the towels every fourth night and also emptied the bin. They also vacuumed it so you didn't have to clean by yourself.



Most of the time I ate at the library in the food for thought bistro. The food (breakfast, lunch and dinner) was included in the room price for me. I didn't have to pay on the counter for it but it took time until all of the staff member knew me/that. Breakfast (only for the residents) was served from 08 to 09 am, it was a continental breakfast and you could get different kind of bread and cereals (it was really tasty, especially the peanut butter). If you want warm food like eggs or something you have to pay extra.



Lunch was served from 12noon to 2pm, it depended on your working hours when you had lunch. Usually your lunchbreak will be from 1pm to 2pm, but sometimes I had early lunch (12noon to 1pm). The team ate together in the Wickham room, one of the conference rooms if it wasn't booked, and not in the dining room. If you were on early lunch you usually were alone (or almost alone) because the rest of the Team went to lunch around 1.15pm when you



covered the desk. There were always around three to five different lunch menus you could choose from (vegetarian or fish or meat). It also went with a dessert and you could get either vegetables or salad with the menu. Dinner was served from 6:30 to 7:30pm and was similar to lunch, with a little less option. It was warm food for dinner. But I didn't go down for dinner often, just a few times with Emily (one of the GWEs). On Sunday they had special meals (Sunday lunch), but you could still eat there if you want. When I ate at the library on the weekend, I also sat in the Wickham room because you usually met one of the GWEs, or other members of the team (e.g. Receptionist, Chaplain).

The Library has a laundry room for the residents on the first floor, which you can use from 09am to around 08pm

Monday to Sunday. You can't hang up your clothes somewhere but you have a dryer where you can put them in, I hung them up in my room sometimes if they weren't completely dry. It also had an ironing board and washing detergent to use in the room.

**Tip:** The key to the room is available at the reception for the residents. But you can use the key from the GWE flat, there is just one washing machine so you have to see if the room is empty first because you can't reserve it.

## About the Team and working at the Library

The Gladstone's Library is a really special and interesting work place and you have a lot of different tasks to do. The whole team is quite big with for example the bistro, the reception, the HR and the housekeeping, but the library team itself is rather small. There is the Director of collections and research (Louisa Yates), the archivist (Dawn Ridding) and the librarian (Lena Shiell) plus the three GWEs and the marketing manager (Julia Kelly). The GWEs are also working at the reception (they are on call in the night) and they are on the enquiry desk at the library on the weekend. I just worked in the library and not at the reception, I never had to work on weekends. On Sunday only ReaderPlus and Residents are allowed to use the library. The access to the library is for free if you are just a Day Reader. The library isn't a lending library, the books aren't allowed to leave the Reading Rooms. Residents can take books to their rooms (if they aren't from the history room) after they checked them out. The library works with a system called Heritage for cataloguing and managing the users. You had to fill out a paper slip by yourself and put it in the place of the book in the shelf if wanted to use a book and "check" it out like that. We did circulation every morning, that means we put the books back in the shelf and took out the slip to note the circulation in heritage. It could take a while if there is a lot of books. A task of me and the GWEs was opening and closing up the library. When we were closing up around 5pm we had to check the Readers if they were allowed to stay until 10pm. We also had half day shifts at the enquiry desk where we had to answer questions, help with the research and keep an eye on the collections. You had to check if the readers were treating the books carefully and if they were following the rules of the reading rooms. We also had to supervise the readers using archive collections under special conditions (e.g. pencils only).

Every GWE and me had each one day in the week reserved for marketing. On our marketing day we worked with Julia and managed the social media sites. We had to do different posts for Facebook, Instagram and Twitter about either the offers of the library, events or the collections we have. We had a program which is called "Hootsuite" where you can manage all social media accounts and plan the posts. Julia gave use a schedule every week with post we had to do.



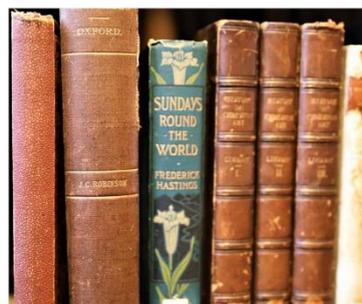
Gladstone's Library  
4 hrs · 📍

Our staff are so excited for Hearth festival this weekend. Graduate work experience librarian, Elena is devouring the fantastic novel for young adults, Rose Interrupted by @LawrencePatrice. Patrice is also part of our Black Tudors panel session. #Hearth  
<http://ow.ly/PuH250y85xH>



Gladstone's Library  
Yesterday at 09:15 · 📍

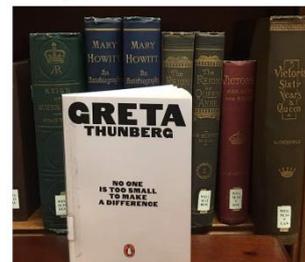
'Sundays Round the World' by Frederick Hastings can be found in the Gladstone Foundation Collection. How do you like to spend your Sunday? #weekend



11 Likes

Gladstone's Library  
3 hrs · 📍

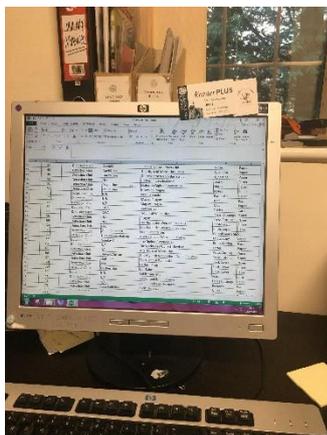
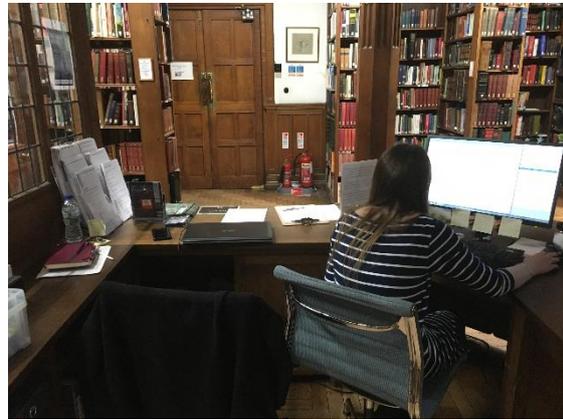
'No one is too small to make a difference'. Our newest addition by Greta Thunberg to our collections can be found at the new addition shelf behind the enquiry desk. Come visit us and read books written by inspiring woman through history #IWD2020 #celebratingwomen



10 Likes

I never had a social media account so that was quite new to me and the posts also had to be in English which wasn't easy but Julia told me a lot about it and helped me if I had problems. She is really great and funny to work with; it was quite difficult to come up with ideas for so many posts but I really enjoyed doing it.

You couldn't access the Reading Rooms if you weren't a registered Reader, that's why we offered Glimpses for tourists. A Glimpse is a 10-20 minutes tour of the library, mostly we talked about the history of the library and our founder W.E.G. The library is a silent working space, so we did the Glimpses outside of the Reading Rooms and let the people look around after that inside for about five minutes. We had to look that they don't disturb our Readers. We offered the Glimpses on 12noon, 2pm and 4pm. It could be from one up to ten people on a Glimpse. I had once 12 people which was quite scary actually. I didn't have to do Glimpses for almost the first four weeks, it was a lot of information to learn and a little bit difficult because my English wasn't the best at the beginning (just in my opinion). After I did the Glimpses a few times I got used to it and it worked well with my English. Me and the GWEs had our own little projects one library and one archive project. My library project was about cataloguing. I had to work on an excel sheet and I sorted items to later connect them to an already existing catalogue entrance in Heritage. Other library tasks were cataloguing, signing up Readers and preparing books. The library also has very interesting archive collections, the archive materials weren't added



into Heritage because we catalogued them onto excel spread sheets. They were a lot of uncatalogued archive collections where we had to number up and putting them correctly into the spread sheets. We had to count how many pages a single item had and write down the numbers, we also had to pack them correctly. I also did conservation rehousing work, and made folders and showed Work based learning students how to make the folders I really loved working with the archive collections and learned a lot from Dawn. It was quite interesting to share our knowledge because I only worked four months in an archive before. She knew a lot about the history of the archive materials. I worked for example on collection of Jim Cotter (an important person of the church) or the detection club (a famous club of crime writers).

We had a weekly rota to manage the marketing days, the desk covers and the glimpses. Usually there were two people working on the enquiry desk, if you weren't on desk duty you worked at the office. It was really great to work with the old books and also work with archive materials. In my last week I had the chance to visit the Flintshire County record office which was next door, it was really interesting when they showed me around.

I could also do a little exhibition in my last month. I could choose the theme by myself. I decided to make an exhibition about Dossie Drew, the granddaughter of William Gladstone. I

could decide which items I chose for the display and make the flyer for it and the other marketing. I had to do a lot of research about Dossie and put a text together about her. I really loved doing the exhibition. I did a post about the exhibition on social media and they were a few nice comments. One guy who is related to her came to stay with his daughter to look at the exhibition. He left us a letter and a picture of Dossie Drew.



## Spending my free time and living in Hawarden

Hawarden is a quite small village: It has a little post office where you can buy snacks, two pubs (“Glynne Arms” and “Fox & Grapes”) and a farm shop down the road where you can eat or buy little stuff. It’s really quiet but it’s very charming! You can take a few different buses to nearby towns either to Mold (where they have a market once a week) or to Buckley, which doesn’t take that long. You can also take a bus to the next “big” city which is Chester. Other than Hawarden, which is in Wales, Chester is in England. It takes by bus around 40 minutes. The buses come quite often, but you have to look out that you’re not heading back to late because they don’t run that frequently in the evening.



**Tip:** The Welsh people pronounce the name of the town where the library is in differently than the English. The locals call it “Harden” instead of “Hawarden”. But the people don’t speak Welsh there, more in the south. The village is near the border to England and is rather English than Welsh.

The food for thought bistro at the library doesn't serve chips or pizza, so if you are interested in unhealthy food the farm shop or the pubs are really nice. I went three times to the Glynne Arms, which is owned by members of the Gladstone's family, it has really good burgers! I went once with Emily and Harry and once with Emily and Carmel (the third GWE) in the evening to eat there. Because we all had time off on different days and the other three were sometimes on duty in the evening, we didn't manage to do something together often. Me and Emily did a lot of stuff together when we both had time off, because we both came from far away (she came from London). The other two lived not far away so they could go home or meet with friends nearby. Two of three GWEs worked at the weekends, so I was doing stuff on my own most of the time. They had off one or two day a week (but also on different days). I also went to the farm shop a few times; they serve breakfast almost the whole day! The farm shop is about 15-20 minutes down the road, you can walk there and eat tasty waffles. It depends when you go but the farm shop and the pubs can be really full. So, go earlier in the evening or in the afternoon. I never was at the Fox & Grapes, if you want to go in the evening you should reserve a table.



Hawarden doesn't have a supermarket, but there are a few nearby. One of them is in Broughton, there is a retail park with a big supermarket (Tesco) and other shops (like clothes shops). Broughton also has a cinema and a few places to eat (McDonalds, Nandoos and more). Other than in Switzerland the shops in Broughton are also open on Sundays.



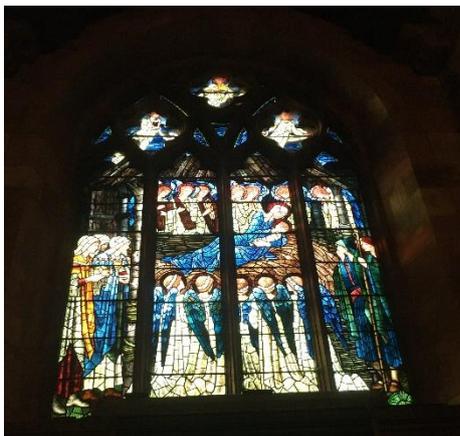
It's about 10-15 minutes by bus from Hawarden to Broughton, it depends on which bus you take. I brought some snacks, water and other stuff there and kept it in my room. We don't have a fridge but you could buy chocolate and other things.

**Tip:** The bus company is called "arriva", you can download an app in the Appstore where you can check the time table and also see where you are on a map while you are on the bus. The stations are not called by the driver and you have to press the stop button by yourself, so the app was quite useful to know when I had to get off.

The Gladstone family still lives in Hawarden. There is a little park which belongs to the Hawarden estate (were the family still lives). A part of the park is open to public and for the rest you need a permission (ask reception for more information). In the part which is open for the public you can see the old castle which was destroyed. You aren't allowed to go near the new castle.

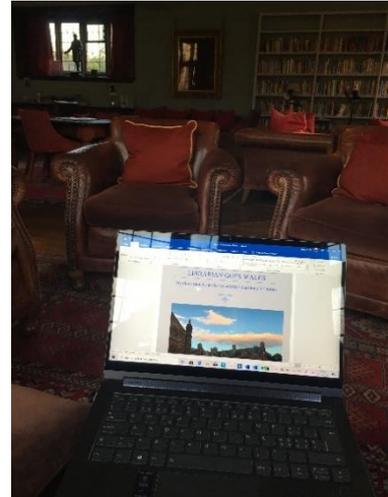


Next to the library is a cemetery, which is interesting to look at. It has a war memorial and really old graves. The graveyard belongs to the St. Deiniol's Church. The church was rebuilt by the Gladstone family, the church has beautiful windows!



If it is nice weather you can sit outside the library on the benches in the backyard. There is also the Gladstone room, a cosy room with a fire place. In the evening you can drink coffee or tea there after dinner. It has a book shelf with fiction books, which you can check out to your room. It also has some board games there and newspapers. You can read books from the Reading Rooms too. There are a few DVDs which you can lend as Resident, but there is no TV in your room just a radio. If it has space you could also work in the Reading Rooms.

I wrote this report in my room and in the Gladstone room 😊



**Tip:** You have to buy the bus ticket when you enter the bus, you can buy with cash or with your credit card. You have to tell the driver where you want to get off. It's possible to buy a single or a return ticket (with the return ticket you can get on the bus anywhere between the two stations like a day ticket).

## Chester:

Like I said the nearest big city is Chester, which is really beautiful. It has nice shops where you can go shopping and also a few restaurants and places where you can eat. The city is a typical English. It has a few old churches and a big cathedral to look at and an old roman ruin. It's good for a walk, there is an old city wall around where you can walk through, the famous Eastgate clock is part of the wall. It was designed by the same architect like the library building. I went there on my second weekend on my own and it has a great atmosphere and a lot of old buildings. Chester has a Zoo.



If you have a car, there is the Snowdonia National Park near (I never went there). If not, you can also take bus to Loggerheads and a nearer mountain Moel Famau, which is peaceful, has a nice view and is good for a walk. You can also visit the Welsh Mountain Zoo at Colwyn Bay by car or train. I visited Moel Famau and the Welsh Mountain Zoo during my time at the Library. I also visited Mold and had a look around the market.



My mother came to visit me for a week, I got the week off which I am really thankful for. It was the highlight of my time in Wales because we went to explore a lot. I could book a room at the library for her (by chance she was in the room next to me). We went to North Wales together, to Chester and also to Liverpool and Manchester.

## North Wales: Conwy and Prestatyn

We went to North Wales by train. It was a little bit difficult because there are different train companies (who don't care about each other's time table), it takes around one to two hours and you can take the train from Hawarden Train station (but you have to change a few times). Both villages Conwy and Prestatyn are at the sea. Conwy is a little old village (with the tinniest house in Wales) and also a historic Castle (Conwy Castle). You have to buy for the castle but it's really impressive. Prestatyn has a few beaches where you can go for a walk.



## Liverpool:

You can go to Liverpool by train, it's about an hour and it's cheaper as Manchester. You can take the train from Hawarden. We went just for a day but it's really cool and beautiful. We went to the Merseyside Maritime Museum (which is free) and the Beatles museum. Liverpool has a lot of museums and you can go shopping there. We went to the Albert Dock by the River Mersey. It also has a lot of places to eat. It was rainy and windy the day we went to Liverpool, on the Docks the wind was really strong (you have to be careful).



## Manchester:

On the last few days of my mother's stay we went to Manchester. We stayed there over night because the train takes about two hours and my mother had to fly back from there anyway. You have to take the train from Chester. Manchester is quite big and there is a lot going on. There are also a few interesting old buildings and places to visit, especially libraries. They have a big public library and two really old libraries where you can go and look at them. One is Chetham's library (which was sadly closed) and the famous John Ryland Library. We went to the John Ryland Library, which was really great and had a lot of old books (a little bit like the Gladstone's Library).



## Going home and COVID-19

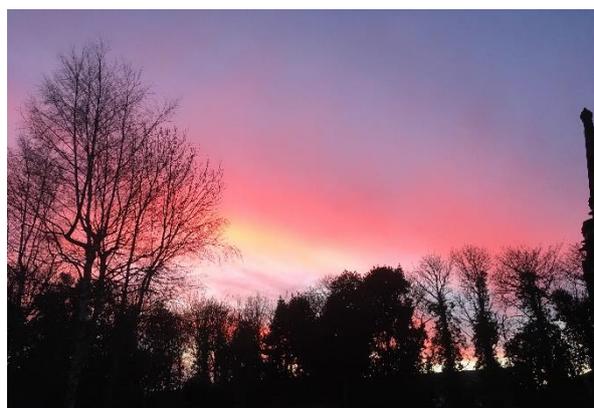
If you didn't get it because of the date of my journey in Wales I had to leave a little bit earlier because of COVID-19. But I got lucky and it was just one week. I was on the last flight back to Zurich from Manchester. There were just about 20 people on the flight, which I never had before. Everyone at the library was really supportive and helpful in this time.

I was really sad when my time at the library came to an end because I enjoyed it so much but I was also glad when I landed in Switzerland. It was the first time I flew alone, when I flew to Manchester.



## My three months at the wonderful Gladstone's Library

I really enjoyed my time at the beautiful Gladstone's library and learned a lot. My English improved over the three months, which will help me in my future career. I would do it again, it is a great program and opportunity! The work at the library varied so much, I could work with the archive material and old books but I also learned how to do marketing with social media. Hawarden is small but there is still stuff to do around it. You can visit a lot of near places if you want.



I also got to know the other GWEs and reading room staff well and I learned much about the library world in the UK. It is weird to live in your work place, you work, eat and sleep there. But it's also an interesting experience, you just have to know how to entertain yourself and you have to look that you get out of the "library bubble" from time to time. I got to know a lot of great people who know so much about their job and also made friends I will hopefully keep for a long time. I was glad that the place where I could stay was already organized and I didn't have to do it myself. The atmosphere at the Gladstone's Library is so special, it's relaxing, quiet and peaceful and you can decide how much news you want to read. I enjoyed my work there, especially the marketing and the archive part. The enquiry desk was a great opportunity to test my English skills. The team was always helpful and supportive, I could do skype interviews to get a job in Switzerland when I got home.

I really want to thank you the wonderful people at the library and the great project who gave me the opportunity which I will cherish the rest of my life!

