

2023 Medieval Trip to Bruges and Ghent: AEL Faculty Outbound Mobility Fund

As part of their medieval studies, postgraduates in the School of English participated in a trip to the medieval towns of Ghent and Bruges, in Belgium. Both cities were important centres of commerce throughout the middle ages and are therefore replete with fascinating buildings, monuments and artefacts that afford a unique insight into the lives of ordinary people.



The medieval city of Ghent

In Bruges, students visited the Church of Our Lady, which is filled with gilded reliquaries and *transi* tombs that show carved sculptures of the deceased on top of their coffin.



The Church of Our Lady, Bruges



Gilded Reliquary, Church of Our Lady, Bruges



Ornate Reliquary, Church of Our Lady, Bruges



Church of Our Lady, Bruges

The students then scaled the city's enormous Belfry where they saw (and heard!) the complex mechanisms that allow enormous bells to ring out various tunes.



MA English Student, Abby, has a unique approach to avoiding study distractions: Ironclad focus by the riverside!



QUB MA English Students, Victoria and Sophia Conquering the Middle Ages with Laughter in Bruges: the Bridge to Endless Learning!



The Medieval Belfry in Bruges



Waving from new heights: Bruges Belfry—Where students elevate their studies to a whole new level!

They also visited the medieval torture museum, where they learned how executioners would tie rats to the bodies of unfortunate prisoners and lock victims into spiked iron maiden caskets.



Medieval Male Chastity Belt at the Torture Museum, Bruges: Medieval Fashion Takes 'Protection' to a Whole New Level!



Postgraduate English Student, Christopher, Embracing His 'Painfully' Educational Experience at the Medieval Torture Museum: a Twisted Sense of Curiosity!



Medieval Torture Museum, Bruges. When Gossip Backfires: Medieval Invention Ensures Women Stick Together, Even When They'd Rather Not!



A Head-Turning Experience at the Medieval Torture Museum, Bruges



MA Student, Laura, Taking 'Student Engagement' to a Whole New Level at the Medieval Torture Museum: The Ultimate Hands-On Learning Experience!"

Students also visited the Basilica of the Holy Blood and knelt before the watchful priest who guards the relic of Christ's blood.



The Church of the Holy Blood, Bruges



Priest Guarding the Relic of the Holy Blood of Christ, Bruges

The medieval monuments in Ghent were equally spectacular. Students toured Gravensteen Castle, where they saw the stone toilets that empty into the moat below via a carved hole. After their trek, students relaxed by taking a boat cruise along the castle's moat and canals, towards the last of the city's preserved medieval gates. Finally, the trip culminated with a visit to St. Bavo's Cathedral, where they saw Jan Van Eyck's monumental Ghent Altarpiece—one of the most celebrated (and beautiful) artworks of the entire middle ages.



Cruisin' the Medieval Vibes in Ghent, with English MA Students Christopher, Laura, Abby, Camila, Victoria, And Sophia: Making Waves Through History!



Medieval Gates, Ghent



The Moat that Surrounds Gravensteen Castle, Ghent



Entrance into Gravensteen Castle, Ghent



Walls of Gravensteen Castle, Ghent



The Courtyard of Gravensteen Castle, Ghent



MA English Students, Sophia and Victoria, Listening to an Audio-Tour in Gravensteen Castle, Ghent



Spectacular Views of Ghent from the Top of Gravensteen Castle



Stone Stairwell in Gravensteen Castle, Ghent



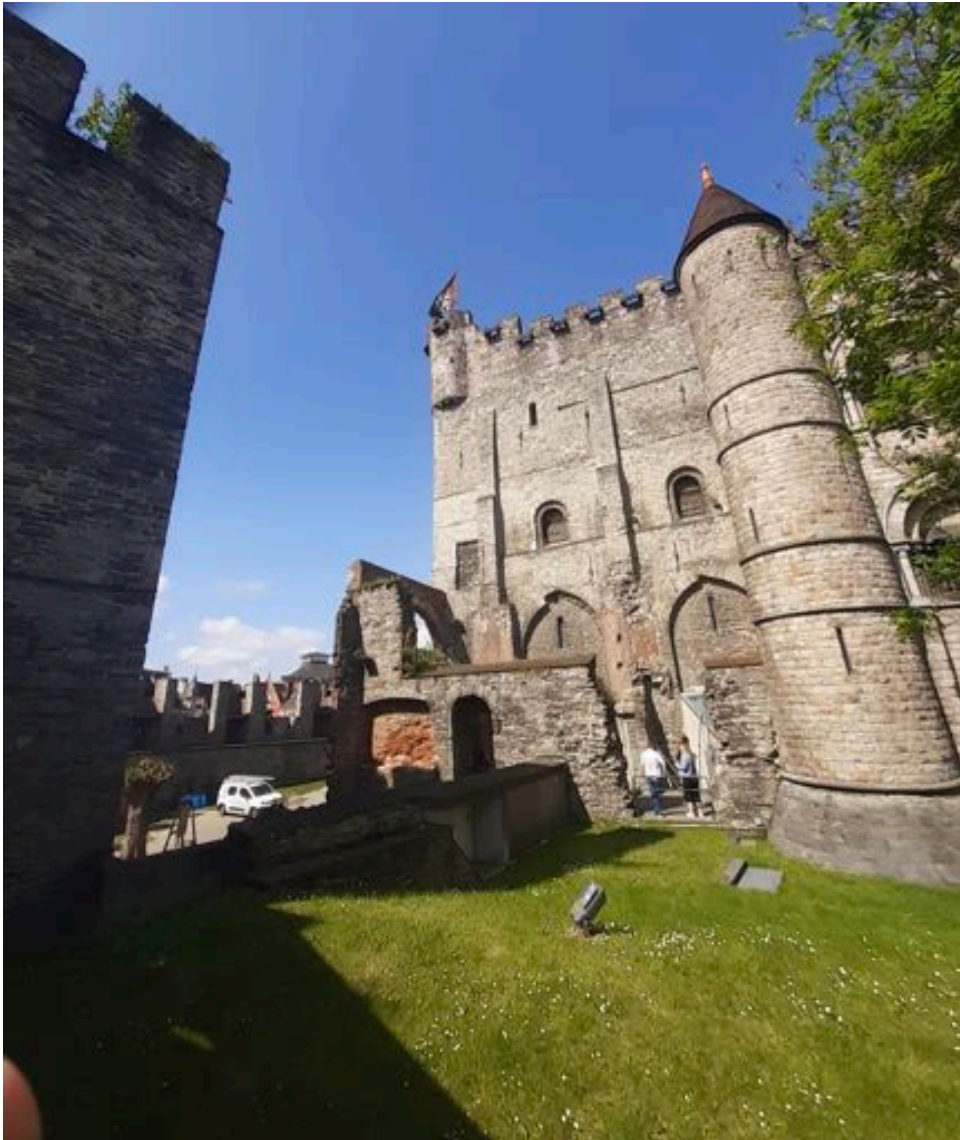
MA Student, Abby, Gets Comfortable on the Stone Medieval Toilet in Gravensteen Castle, Ghent



Medieval Toilet Plumbing in Gravensteen Castle, Ghent: Straight into the Moat!



MA Student, Victoria, Surveys Ghent Cityscape



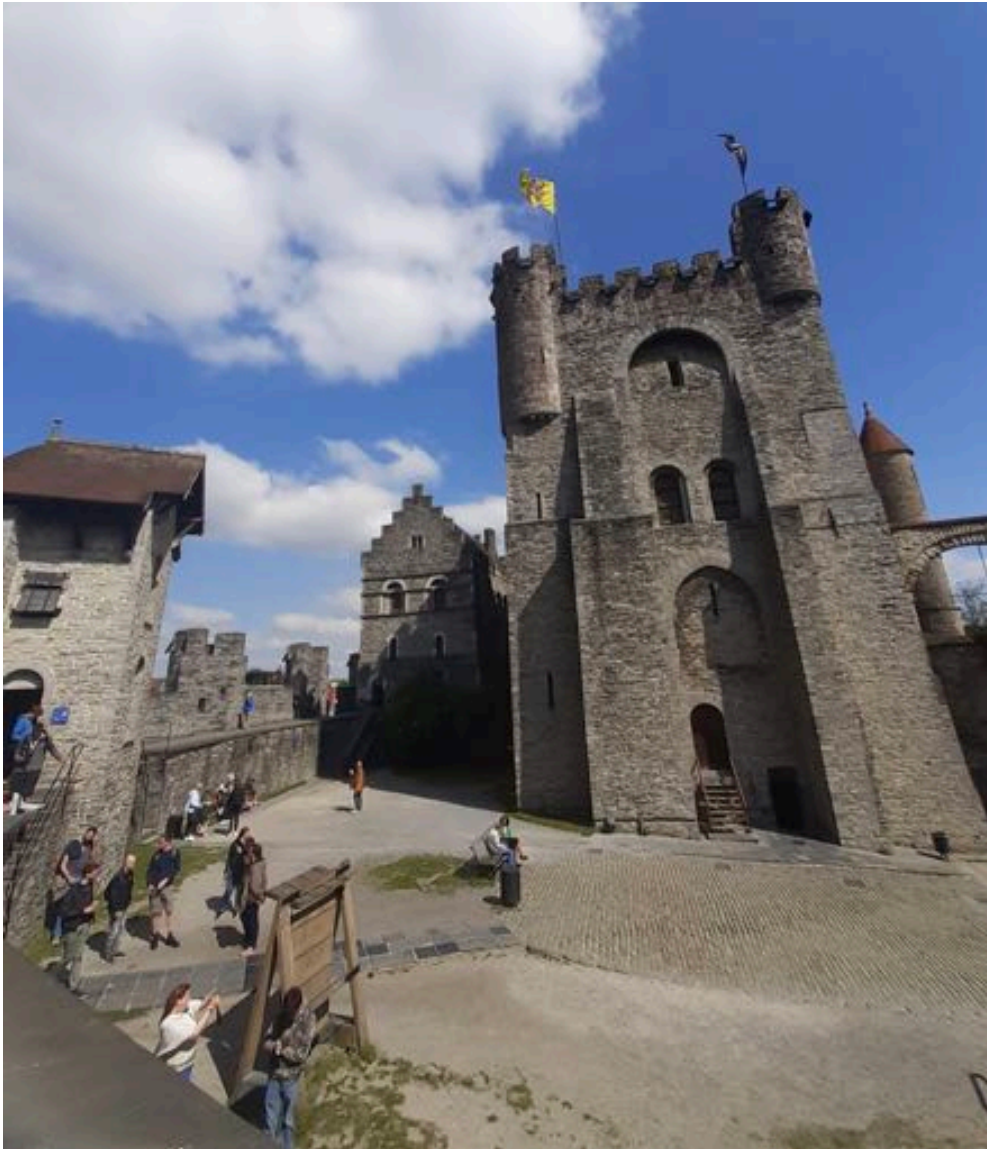
Inner Grounds of Gravensteen Castle, Ghent



Crucifix Window Inside Gravensteen Castle, Ghent



Medieval Chapel in Gravensteen Castle, Ghent



View of Gravensteen Castle, Ghent



Postgraduate English Students, Christopher, Abby, Laura, Camila, Sophia and Victoria, at the Entrance to Gravensteen Castle, Ghent



Saint Bavo's Cathedral, Ghent



Transi Tomb in Saint Bavo's Cathedral, Ghent



Transi Tomb in Saint Bavo's Cathedral, Ghent



MA Students Christopher, Laura, Abby, Camila, Victoria and Sophia Conquering the Medieval Waters of Ghent with a Smile: Sailing Through History One Grin at a Time!



Detail of Jan Van Eyck's *Ghent Altarpiece* in Saint Bavo's Cathedral, Ghent



Jan Van Eyck's *Ghent Altarpiece* in Saint Bavo's Cathedral, Ghent

Student Testimonies:

What I liked most about this module was how we always brought into reality what we were learning, rather than just reading it from a textbook. I think acting in class or drawing fixed my knowledge of certain medieval practices much more than just reading about them. Also, I was motivated to tell other people about the Middle Ages and what I was learning by the simple fact that the classes were fun and original, so I liked to tell what I had done in class

—Camila Montero Villamil, MA Student, School of English

It was a trip of a life time.

—Sophia Eggleston, MA Student, School of English

The Holy Blood relic housed in Bruges' Basilica of the Holy Blood was an incredible artifact to have the opportunity to see, and the condition of praying before a priest to witness the blood in such a well-maintained and historical building made for an unforgettable experience. The presentation of the blood in its medieval reliquary, and the implications of blood itself as something tangibly divine, is fascinating when considered alongside the greater tradition of medieval material worship.

—Christopher McDowall, MA Student, School of English

I think it consolidated many of the topics we studied in class. I was struck by the idea of affective piety when looking at the paintings and artefacts, such as the images of Christ being whipped. Also walking through the churches made me think of ductus and how the layout of each building was designed to generate devotional worship. In general, it was fascinating to see the theories we studied applied to real life.

—Anonymous MA Student, School of English