



AT WIKO WITH A BABY
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We arrived in Berlin when the chestnut trees lining the streets in Grunewald were in full bloom and preparations for the *Abschiedsfest* had already started. Exactly 12 weeks before, I had given birth to our baby daughter Martha Johanna. It just goes to show that a lot can happen in a year, as I had accepted the fellowship offer well before I even knew I was pregnant. It probably was a bit insane of me to still decide to accept the fellowship and venture abroad with such a small infant in tow. Practicalities aside, I remember the nagging feeling of guilt when thinking about having to take my baby away from the surroundings she had gotten used to in her first weeks of life, worrying about how she would take the journey and how we would cope far from the support of family and friends. But in the end everything went rather smoothly, and we all enjoyed our three months in

Berlin. Needless to say, the whole Wiko adventure with a baby would not have been possible if my husband Alfonso had not been able to accompany me.

Of the three of us, it was actually Martha Johanna who settled in fastest and immediately seemed to feel at home in our flat in Villa Walther. In some way she became as if my ID during our stay at Wiko – the Fellow with a baby. Most of the time when staff or other Fellows greeted or approached me at Wiko, they did not ask how I was, but instead how the baby was doing. Inevitably our little baby was the centre of our existence even at Wiko, and our life and work had to be accommodated around her feeding and nap times.

Thinking back to my time at Wiko, what comes to mind first is the almost unrealistically helpful and attentive staff and of course the excellent conditions that are created for carrying out research. Wiko is in every sense an academic spa, where all these wonderful people work to make your every little wish (be it practical or impractical) come true. One of the things I still feel slightly sorry about is that, due to the nature of my research, I did not have a need to make use of the wonderful library resources available. Also that I could not spend more time in my office. I had initially opted for a separate office, but it soon became apparent that it made more sense to work at my desk in the apartment, as no valuable time was lost getting there and back, and I could be easily at hand if needed.

My project at Wiko was part of a larger project, which I am currently leading at the University of Tartu. The main goal of this research is to focus on the study of word and sentence prosody in spontaneous language usage of Estonian varieties spoken on the islands. The analysis incorporates variation and various interactions at work between different prosodic features (e.g. quantity and syllable duration, or intonation and quantity). The work is experimental, and as we are investigating spontaneous speech it involves working through a lot of data. While at Wiko, I focussed above all on labelling recordings from the Island of Kihnu. Kihnu is a tiny island off the west coast of Estonia, where even today people wear their traditional folk costume on a daily basis. The intonation of this variety is distinctly different from that of other dialects of Estonian. The final goal of this work is to publish a book about phonetic characteristics of this dialect. The time at Wiko was extremely valuable because it gave me the opportunity to make a good start with the analysis.

A positive Wiko experience that has to be mentioned was the German tuition. Even if I joined in in mid-May and only had time to attend an hour a week, I found the lessons nevertheless extremely useful. I had studied some German as an undergraduate, but had

abandoned it for Dutch. Now in Berlin, for the first time in my life, I actually attempted speaking German, and found it fun. Also, attending the classes and lunches at the German table was a great way to get to know some other Fellows and spouses.

It can be difficult to join a group that has had several months to solidify at the stage when many are already thinking about leaving. I remember being asked a few weeks into my fellowship whether I felt fully integrated with the Wiko community. I'm not sure that full integration was possible at all at that point and considering our circumstances, but I think that during the time available our family became at least partially integrated. In fact, in a somewhat curious way, Alfonso and I merged as if into one Fellow: except for family dinners, we could never participate in anything together (as one of us always stayed with the baby), but between the two of us we managed to take part in all the Tuesday colloquia, most meals and several evening lectures. We both enjoyed meeting so many interesting people and hearing about such a wide range of topics. We certainly learnt a lot about many things, and many aspects of Wiko reminded us of our former college life at Cambridge.

On a more personal level, our time at Wiko gave us an opportunity to really grow into our role as parents, to grow into a family. We probably spent more time together than ever before. I fondly remember our long walks with the pram along the streets in our leafy neighbourhood, near the lakes and in the Grunewald forest. As to the bustling cultural life of Berlin, we had to miss most of it; opera, concerts or theatre were out of reach for the tired parents of a small infant.

The three months, which was far too short a time for major academic achievements or even for an opportunity to talk to all the other Fellows, was a long time for Martha Johanna. By the time we left Wiko in the middle of the summer heat, she had spent just a little longer than half of her life in Germany. Her list of accomplishments from that period outshone our's by far and included such important milestones as turning, grabbing and babbling. At Wiko, she said her very first word: *emme*.

Towards the end of our time we all felt so much at home that we started to miss Wiko even before we left. We hope to return at some point in our lives.