

Canoe Club: Scotland New Year 2009-10

The Week Long Trip Where One River Was Paddled (Twice)

People (4 full members, 3 non-full members)

- Antony Farrington
- Luke Geldermans
- Alistair "snow drift" Cott
- Rachel "too cold to paddle" Fox
- Tom "hand-roll" Leeman
- Rik Williams
- Rory Fyffe

Trip Report

Once again they went to Scotland; hoping that this time there would be water. This time there was, quite a bit actually. Unfortunately though, it was all frozen as snow on land, and what little was in the rivers was mainly ice. Nonetheless, a good time was had by all.

27th Dec

Everyone met at Beit at the much later than usual time of 9am, with the intention of leaving by 10am sharp (as Ally needed to catch a train into London). The bus was loaded with alarming efficiency; so much so that faff karma was inevitably going to ensue: Firstly, it turned out that Rik's boat had accidentally been left in Paddington stores after the last trip, and then Ally's train was delayed meaning he didn't reach Beit until 1020. We reached Paddington and after 10 minutes of searching the stores for a boat that really isn't *that* small it was concluded that Rik's boat must have been in Beit stores afterall. We eventually left Beit for the second time, but at last with Rik's boat at 11am.

The journey initially ran smoothly until around Birmingham where we hit some shocking traffic. We left the traffic briefly to pick up Tom from the M5 services, and then re-joined the traffic until Manchester.

From then on the journey went well and we made up some time, finally reaching the hut at about 0030, but at least with food for the next days meals.

28th Dec

Scotland is beautiful in the snow, which is fortunate as it was immediately apparent that there wasn't much paddling to be done. We initially headed up to the Dam in the vague hope that it might be releasing: it wasn't. Unfortunately the bus got stuck in the layby next to the dam, so a lot of faff putting the snow chains on was to be had. Once everyone had had a go at getting the snow chains back off again, they were finally removed and we headed back down to Spean bridge, still hopeful that we might just be able to paddle it. Not surprisingly, it was very low; but would have been paddleable

had it not been frozen solid the entire way across the river. It was now getting late, so a last ditch attempt to go paddling was made by heading to the Arkaig. Somehow the Arkaig wasn't frozen at all, and although very low, it was a nice fun paddle down for the group (minus Rachel). We managed to catch a few small surf waves and have a quick game of king of the wave below the main event. Rachel kindly shuttled the bus and walked back up the river; meeting us about halfway down with her camera.



29th Dec

After another quick look at the Spean and a glance at the equally low and frozen Roy; it was decided to go and use the boats for another precipitation related sport, but one more appropriate to the temperature: snowboating.

We inspected the map for suitable looking contour lines and headed for a hill just above Fort William. At last we had some luck and found a nice long hill with plenty of snowboating potential. Rik kindly offered for us to use his boat jokingly saying "it doesn't matter if it gets broken". Inevitably a ramp was soon built, and we were managing to get some pretty respectable air. It was at this point that an ironic, and very sad event occurred: Rik made a run towards ramp mark 2, missed it completely and went down the innocuous looking slope to one side - only to go over a very sharp rock, which with a load crack created a big, forked split in the bottom of his boat. This, alas was the end of poor "Scumfacer's" river paddling days; although he was promoted to snowboating boat of choice.

A few more runs were had before everyone headed into Fort-William for a few supplies. Realising that a lot of walking in the snow was quite likely, Ant and Rory annoyed Rach by both buying the exact same gaiters that she had just got. Muhahaha.

30th Dec

Getting fed-up of not being able to paddle, yet another attempt was made to paddle the Spean. This time it was decided to test the breakability of the ice, but it was considerably too thick to even break, let alone safely paddle on.

As a result it was decided to try something new and head to the "Highland Mystery World". Unfortunately, it's location turned out to be a complete mystery and it was eventually found out that it had closed down years ago.

Undeterred, the group of intrepid tourist attraction hunters (minus Luke, who stayed at the hostel) continued on and headed off towards Oban.

The Scottish Sea Life Sanctuary was visited first. This proved to be a very interesting (although quite expensive) visit. The pair of otters happened to like posing for and playing in front of the camera,

giving Rachel (and Rik?) plenty of photo opportunities. There was also an inquisitive Seal, along with plenty of the usual Sea Life Sanctuary suspects.

From there they missioned on to Oban. Rory, Ant and Tom decided to go on the Oban Distillery Tour, whilst Ally and Rik elected to go for the chocolate factory tour. Rachel worried everyone by choosing not to go on the chocolate factory tour, a feeling that was not eased when she was spotted walking straight past the Lindt shop!

As it turned out, the Distillery tour was full and the chocolate factory had finished for the day. Ally and Rik got some fish and chips and then met everyone but Rachel for a rather calorific Crepe. The day was finished with a full-scale search of Oban for Rachel; who had left her phone in the bus, a shopping trip and back to the hostel for some well earned drinks and more good food.

31st Dec

It was decided that whilst there was no real chance of paddling the Etive, it was certainly worth a visit.

Rik and Luke stayed at the hostel to get some work done, and the rest headed off. First was a visit to the Glen Coe visitor centre, which gave a very interesting timeline of the history of Glen Coe, along with more recent conservation efforts. From there it was on to Glen Etive. The group parked just beyond the get out for the middle Etive after a very careful drive along the icy road.



As suspected a lot of the River was frozen, so much so that it was at least 4 inches thick in places, and one of the small tributaries was being ice-climbed... As the group walked up the Etive, an RAF Sea King rescue helicopter flew up the valley, this time not for for a member of ICCC! Right Angle Falls were investigated, which was rather picturesque; although so iced over, it was completely un-runnable. From there it was back to the bus and onto (?the pub?) for some food and drink. (In the case of Ant, Rory and Tom this drink consisted of a pint of Ale and some unusual whisky).

Back at the Hostel, general tarting up of ICCC ensued, along with cooking of Haggis, Tatters and Turnips. Rik, Ally and Luke then chickened out of the Ceilidh at the Nevis Centre, leaving just Rachel, Ant, Rory and Tom to the fun. As it happened ICCC was on the same table as Alice, an ICCC Alumni! Rory as usual got stuck into the Ceilidh, with Tom in particular close behind and a good night with plenty of drinking (Cola on Rachel's part) was had by all. The bus got back to the hostel at about 0130. Rory and Ant managed to eat most of the last two days leftovers before bed.

1st Jan

Mainly due to the night before, it was nearly lunch time by the time everyone was up. A good old fry up was had, and it was decided to head off to the Arkaig for one last paddle before we left. By the time everyone was on the water (apart from Rachel, who selflessly offered to shuttle.....) it was early

afternoon. It was a pleasant run down to the main event, with the river still low, but fortunately not frozen. This is where it got interesting (and amusing). Ally was first down the main event, followed by Ant. Ally got stuck in the hole at the first drop and swam. Ant ran the drop extra-hard left (mostly down the rock) to get down to help Ally, but by the time Ant was able to help, Ally had self-rescued himself and all his kit (apart from one wetsuit booty - still missing). Rory was next down, and also got caught out by the same hole as Ally, resulting in the second swim. Luke then followed down (successfully) to help rescue kit. Tom was the penultimate man down, capsized (same hole), lost his paddles, ran the second drop upside down and impressively hand rolled at the bottom. Rik failed to buck the trend and also swam in the same hole. Tom's paddled



were rescued from their pin on the bottom of the river above the second drop, and Luke went up to re-run the drop whilst everyone got back in their boats. This time Luke rolled in between drops to finish off the selection of mess-ups. The rest of the river was finished without incident and it was back to the hut for the last meal of the trip and a few drinks.

2nd Jan

It was decided to head home as there was no further paddling to be had, and skiing on Ben Nevis for a day was just too expensive for most. An early start was made to prevent a repeat of the late arrival at the start of the trip. The bus nearly got away at the planned time, and was only briefly slowed by dropping off of Rik's boat at the Nevis Centre, which he had negotiated would be the new ornament on top of the reception desk! The traffic was better than on the way up, but still bad, meaning everyone left the union after unpacking the bus by about 10pm.

Money

- C&S - £44.61
- Trust - £96.66
- Per person cost - £195.66

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Photos: Rachel Fox

Caving Club Winter Tour Report

Numbers Attending

Full members - 12

Others - 2

Total - 14

Dates

18th December to the 24th December

What Happened and Members Impressions

The detailed descriptions of the two days of caving not canceled due to the bad weather (Saturday and Monday) are described by members of the club and are their impressions of how the tour went. As such the detailed descriptions only concentrate on certain trips and can miss out parts of the tour carried out by other members on different 'teams' or trips that day.

Friday:

Coming up via Nottingham and Manchester, and enduring the 50mph roadworks, it was well after 2am that we arrived at Greenclose, swinging out along the A65 and coming back via Clapham to avoid the snowed in side roads. The snow didn't seem too heavy... yet.

Saturday:

Before the tired students had so much as raised their heads, an NPC team was off with our Notts I permit. Our caving plan, quickly discussed from the bunk beds, was to attempt to follow the 4x4 up onto Leck fell, catch up the NPC team and rig an additional route in the first section. Others of us would pop down LJs as far as the Battleaxe traverse for a more gentle introduction to Yorkshire SRT.

This plan started to come unstuck when we realised the van couldn't really cope with the gradient. After fiddling with snow chains and a fair bit of pushing, we got ourselves about halfway there. However, in view of the conditions and the possibility of everything icing up by night, we decided to turn the van around where we could and park back down near Leck village. By the time we were changed and heading back up it was starting to get dim - two miles of uphill walking carrying personal gear + rope bags doesn't do much for one's underground enthusiasm!

The most dangerous moment was probably reaching the entrance pitch - slippery snow steps directly above the drop until one could clip into the rope! The prerigged pitches were quickly dropped, and we started the search for Adamson's route, while Andy rigged Central.

Failing initially to climb up & turn back at the right point in the rift, we found our

way into a boulder collapse somewhere near the service. Turning back we heard mutterings from up and in front, which found us the derigging NPC party. Liberating their rope bags and saying our goodbyes, we started the rerig down. Timing with the central party was almost perfect, and we regrouped in heading down to the big pitches.

These were rigged by Andy with ease and a few slings, and we found ourselves on the comedy traverse to the large pitch next to the sump. I climbed up into the little passage on the left (as it was getting rather crowded, and it's rather warm up there). I thus had a particularly amusing perspective of Dan plunging up to his shoulders in an innocuous looking patch of water between the stones directly below the sump and the boulders around the lip of the sump.

Everyone was super quick on the way out, and we were timed nicely together meeting again at the head of central, and then bunching up for the entrance pitch which delivered us to the still air and snowy landscape of Leck fell. The visibility was absolutely stunning - the lights all the way down to the coast standing out clearly. We followed the GPS back to the road again, finding the snow covered heather rather easier on the way down.

Back at the van, the LJ crew were already changed and perhaps only moderately shivering. As we were clean and rather dry, we simply belted up while wearing full caving gear and were driven home by Dave. Martin had excelled himself in the NPC kitchen again, leaving us racing to change in the back room in order to get our dinner in.

Sunday:

Heavy snow so day spent learning knots and how to 'rig' a cave inside the caving hut. This caused great discussion amongst the more experienced members of the club and taught the newer members of the club the finer point of SRT. This provided vital training to increase experience and to prepare newer member of the club for expedition caving.

Monday:

Spending our snowed-in Sunday wisely we prepared for an obscene collection of megatrips. The trip planning got so complex that the 'G2 2010 Calendar' was put to use to construct a truth table of cave trips. The first version contained a 4x4 matrix of trips (including Flood) which then swelled to include Hensler's, before finally being reduced to a more sane 3x3 as Dave and Martin dropped out.

The minibus was slalom'd in the vague direction of Clapham, initially misdirected (by Tetley) into a cul-de-sac before being freed and skidded into the carpark. While getting ready it transpired that Andy had decoupled the two meticulously packed Stream bags and just taken one. So Martin did sterling service as taxi driver in rescuing the tackle, and the long arduous slog through the snow began.

The view was absolutely stunning, with a break in the snow and bright skies as we trudged through the snow and wandered past the icicles in the gorge. The going got rather more deep up on the Fell itself, with Clare and Jana sinking into their waists. The Thermos' were dispersed to the three cave entrances, and the Stream passage slogged off through the drifts.

Stream - Dis: Dan & Jarv

The entrance tube was issuing forth a warming fog of air. Quickly wriggling into a harness, we bombed down the entrance and into the warm bowels of the Earth (controversially, rigging the entrance tube with a rope - see Winter Tour 2008, the Tet incident). Rigging was pleasant on 9mm, slinging maillons between the interesting mix of Petzl stainless hangers and P-bolts. The traverse to gain the 2nd (underground) pitch is right up high in the roof, one of our comedy 16ft dyneema slings was put to use making a rope ladder for the following to use. From the bottom of the pitch and up on the large traverse ledges, a massive 2m y-hang (rigged with an alpine butterfly to allow easier gaining of the high traverse on the true left of the rift). Just 5m down is a comedy 'inverting' deviation with in-situ tat (arguably better as a free hanging rebelay), which pulls you one way to pass it, holding the rope clear, then turns over to prevent rope rub when below the massive sling of the lower rebelay. From here, a clamber over boulders (kind of above a 30m pitch) is passed. Having only the suggested 36m rope, initially rigging this with a traverse line off the obvious p-bolts resulted in a rope too-short incident & a quick bit of prussic'ing while the following cavers salvaged length from the traverse. As suggested by Andy, instead of using the pitch bolts to rig another comedy y-hang, a hang from the right hand wall followed by a 8ft deviation to the other p-bolt allowed a pleasant descent. Starting with a 45-50m and rigging the traverse might be more pleasant for the less sure on their feet.

Finding our way into the main system involved a bit of head scratching - it looks like you're walking along an enormous cavern, but the truth is rather more complex with lots of muddy sidechambers and places to loose ones way. Pushing down a particularly tight crawl, I came to a little chamber with something like: "BRADLY POT - REDISCOVERED 1984" written in stark angular carbide letters. We back-tracked, refound the draught, and quickly found ourselves along the dry muddy crawls and to the only well defined junction, with the digging skids still sitting there looking rather forlorn.

We yomped our way to the main chamber, tripping over William and Alex who were sitting in a little oxbow slightly out of the breeze nonchalantly munching sweets. Their progress down bar had been entirely without incident, except for the realisation that William did not have a croll (but a second 'basic' hand jammer instead), and William getting his long golden hair caught in his descender. Alex leant him his knife so that he could achieve a mid-rope trim, which only necessitated him loosing about half his pony tail.

We back tracked as far as the bottom of Bar Pot, where the pretty young things kept warm in the nice still dry air, while the gluttons for punishment threw themselves down the body-sized slick tube exiting the other half of the bar pitch on the left hand side. This immediately gained a pleasurable low streamway with dark waters gently drifting over flat cobbles. Initially we headed 'Right' upstream (in as much as it can be determined with such low flow), but were turned back after about 15m as Andy found himself properly grovelling in a flat squeeze and not seeing any way on nor particularly liking it. He backed himself out slowly via pull-ups with his toes, and we progressed in reverse order downstream.

DanG grumbled that the way on wasn't very pleasant, but it was certainly continuing and after ten minutes of crawling we could hear voices! Andy, who was heading back to Bar anyway, decided to stop in a little chamber. Dan and Jarv, egged on by Tetley's mutterings pushed forwards at water level, which soon turned into a flat out crawl in water, and then into some rather curious passage where one's chin scoured out a groove in the mud for one's chest which then scooped out sufficient space for one's hips. Surfacing the other side rather worse for wear (and with horrible gritty mud in

every glove, oversuit pocked, srt gear and orifice), we tripped over the stone barrier indicating not to go down there, and were faced with Andy's voice issuing from the obvious dry crawly bypass to our left. Amusing, on the small scale survey back at the NPC, the wet section we had passed wasn't even joined up.

It turned out the Disappointment lot had been wandering around down here for quite some time. They had originally been at this junction an hour ago, but had decided that both ways looked too grim to be the way on. Being enterprising, they had then spent the last hour crawling down almost every bit of Hensler's horror sections, turning back each time just shy of the breakthrough into other parts of the system, or when the going got unpleasantly tough. However, they did report that Hensler's stream passage was rather nice.

At this point we said our goodbyes, and Dan and I headed out Dis. The climb up to the right at the big boulder was fairly obvious, leading quickly via a small climb to the first rope. These bottom two pitches followed each other quickly and were in a really very nice high chamber, connected via a narrow bit of sinuous streamway. Looking back down from the 4th pitch head was pretty cool - nice place for a photo!

The rift connected the 3rd and 4th pitches was quite long and fairly slow going with tackle. The obvious climb up from the water level reached a boulder-rubble filled chamber, which then lead on to a rather disappointing aven. From here on the going was rather more crawl tastic, flipping the tackle bag in front or dragging it with twisted shoulders. The 3rd pitch was another nice little number, and was followed by more rift until reaching the 1st/2nd cascades. At the top of the first pitch, the tackle was stashed and we mentally prepared ourselves for the ducks. In an odd way these had been hanging over our enjoyment of what is really a very nice bit of cave - each pitch derigged took us closer. The walking passage from the top of the 1st quickly degrades into a stoop and then the water, quickly reaching the portcullis. Tackled head first on one's back, with arms along side, this was a spacious and quick little wriggle with plenty of air space. Tobacco and cameras were carefully passed through, the main bags floated on, and then the frigid winter water enjoyed.

The experience wasn't really bad at all - quite refreshing really. The wet crawl guarding the entrance was more of an ordeal - rather choked with rubble and with little airspace, I went through with helmet on one side getting an earful of freezing water. The ceiling is a slab of rock that dips down before finally passing on the far side and arriving in the graffiti filled entrance cave. Quickly wringing out the chests of our furies, we powered our way out through the lovely rift, finding it rather tough with the weight of our clothing and sheer slipperiness of our water lubricated wellies and oversuits. The climb was surpassed, and the rather useless bit of 9mm rigged off the p-bolt removed. The little entrance chamber was actually a bit chilly, as Dis seems to either slightly suck in, or at least have so little draught that the air mixes in the entrance.

At this point we found our thermos of hot blackcurrant squash, which was mainly sipped by Jarv as he watched Dan prepare a freshly rolled cigarette - "Not because I want one, but because after having taken all this gear so far I feel it deserves it". This was a rather long winded process as wet fingers saw goodbye to a good few rizlas, then extraneous drips of water destroying successive rolling attempts. Particularly amusing was a single drip off the helmet destroying a nearly perfect attempt by blowing a hole in the Rizla. Then the attempts to suitably dry out and get sparking the cigarette lighter began, which after much flint, cursing and disassembly resulted in a successful smoke.

We then shot off for Clapham, scrunching our way across the snowed in

landscape. It was rather chilly, and being absolutely soaked we didn't have time to stand around. Back at the bus we were rather surprised to discover that we were the only team back. Cracking the ice off the stalwart UZX, we were getting changed in the back when a pickup truck cruised up alongside in the deserted carpark and a jackbooted figure climbed out, coming up to drivers window. We were expecting a dogging enquiry, but it merely turned out to be Martin offering his services as 4x4 driver. Fully changed, we were back at the NPC ten minutes later, warming our frozen toes in front of the fire while enjoying a delicious curry.

The Bar team (swelled to 5 members) and Stream (down to 3) got back to Clapham simultaneously, and were both back within the hour.

Remaining Days:

The remaining days had to severe weather and as such planned trips were canceled. With the club snowed in on a couple of days no planned activity was carried out on those days. Despite this, training such as that discussed on Sunday continued to be given and because of this we were able to stick to our aims and objectives. Not only this we were able to carry out a number of other events such as hiking in the snow and orienteering exercises.

Financial Status

The financial status of the tour is good. We have followed the budget as proposed in the tour application and funding given to us has been spent to try and reduce the costs to the students.

Aims and Objectives

The tour allowed some of our aims and objectives to be achieved. The new members of the club were trained in preparation of expedition caving and enabled them to hone their skills. We were also able to run trips to caves that due to length and seriousness of the undertaking, as well as restricted land access arrangements are unavailable in a normal weekend trip.

However, due to the adverse weather we were not able to accomplish as much caving as planned. Caving is a weather dependant sport and as such we are at the mercy of the elements. Over the time that we had available because of the weather we were not able to provide as many trips as planned. Despite this the rest of our objectives were reached and the decrease in the amount of caving that we planned to carry out was not a severe detriment to the club.

Changes

As mentioned above there were small changes to the planned activities and the aims and objectives of the trip. Due to the weather we could not carry out as much caving as planned. Out of the possible six days of caving we only managed to carry out our original plans on two of them. This caused us to rely on back up plans, such as training in rope technique and familiarity of knots.

However, because of the extreme severity of the weather we were not able to follow all back up plans and this caused us to come up with some alternate activities

during the time spent on tour. Some of these included walks in the snow (which we had equipment for in case weather got worse and as some of our members were planning to carry out such activities after the tour) as well as more sedate activities such as board games.

Major Issues

As mentioned a number of times the only issues that arose was the bad weather. Although we had prepared for such weather (acquiring snow chains, etc.) the weather was so severe that we were not able to continue with some of our planned events.

Improvements

An improvement that could be made would be to have better contingency plans for bad weather. Although caving is a weather dependent activity and we cannot continue with it in bad weather more thought could be put into alternate activities. We coped well with the problems we had and were able to continue with our aims and objectives (although in ways we had not considered when we started the tour). However, with more thought put to this problem we may come up with better ways of fulfilling our aims despite the setback of bad weather.

Despite this, as mentioned, caving is a weather dependant activity and if the weather is as severe as it was over the winter tour then there is not much more we can do to improve the chances of completing our planned activities.

Photos

Images from the tour can be found at:

http://www.union.ic.ac.uk/rcc/caving/photo_archive/tours/2009%20-%20yorkshire%20winter/dirindex.html

However, a selection are shown below.









ICGC Winter Tour

Portmoak, Scotland.

Attendance

7 current Imperial students. (3 committee members)

2 Imperial alumni.

Dates of Tour

From the 27th of December, 2009 to the 2nd of January, 2010.

Tour Report

The tour began at 07:00 on the 27th of December, with 5 of the current Imperial students meeting at the Union for the minibus. During the journey to Portmoak, we picked up the remaining 2 current Imperial students and met the Imperial alumni at the Scottish Gliding Centre, at Portmoak; these were our gliding instructor for the week and a friend of the club who had experience of the area. With only one driver for the journey to Scotland, frequent breaks were taken, stopping 3 times along route. During this night, we visited a local Chinese restaurant, which we visited on last year's tour. An alumni member, Rory Condon, took our single seat glider, 96, for his use throughout this trip so as not to inconvenience other, less experienced, club members for use of the two seat gliders.

The 28th was the first day of flying available to our trip: the day was mainly used to clear our instructor for instructing at the airfield. This took the majority of the flyable day: in the evening the group chose to see Avatar, at the local cinema.

The 29th was the first day where students were able to fly. By unanimous agreement of the committee members present, the non-committee members flew first with 5 students being flown on the day before the light failed. Moderate north-westerly winds led to wear wave conditions, enabling the students to soar to the Benarty ridge near to the airfield. Flights for this day were approximately 40 minutes long. During the evening, we visited a local Indian restaurant recommended to us by the airfield.

On the 30st, we were unable to fly due to strong, easterly conditions causing difficulties whilst landing. The club aided the airfield whilst setting up for the trial flight which discovered the difficulty of the conditions. After discovering that it was unflyable, two committee members and 3 Imperial students then chose to climb the nearby Bishop ridge whilst a committee member and the remaining club members stayed behind at the airfield's clubhouse, playing on a Wii games system which our instructor brought and doing coursework. In the evening, the group chose to visit the cinema again, where we viewed the new Sherlock Homes film.

The 31th saw another flyable day with northerly wind generating soarable conditions over Benarty again. The two remaining committee members yet to fly were able to fly during this day, which was

shortened by snow-showers. In the evening, we attended the Edinburgh Hogmanay celebration staying to watch the fireworks and leaving around 1AM. The flights on this day were both 48 minutes long.

New Year's Day was the final flyable day of our tour, and it was our goal to fly all present club members. This was achieved at the cost of flight durations, which were slightly shorter than the last flights. The evening was used setting our accounts and packing for our departure the next day.

During the 2nd of January, we travelled back from Portmoak, heading out at 8:15 and arriving in London at 22:45. Traffic on the M6 significantly delayed our journey home.

It is the opinion of the club that the tour was successful, with all members flying over an hour and on the ridge. This compares favourably to last year's tour, where most members flew for only 20 minutes due to poor soaring conditions. The minibus was of great use to the club, allowing all 9 members of our trip to comfortably journey around Scotland : the attendance of a alumni driver to aid our student driver also allowed our drivers to take some nights off. Due to constraints of aviation, no member of the club drank any particularly great amount of alcohol on any day as all members were keen to fly.

The weather throughout the week was for the most part flyable, however there was a constant layer of snow, though never deep enough to prevent flying.

The club members reaction to the tour was favourable, with all members satisfied by the safety and activities of the tour. The Hogmanay festival posed a challenge, demanding that the group kept together and maintain good communication. By careful planning, we were able to attend the event without incident. The aims of the tour were met.

Financial state of the Tour

Students paid for their accommodation at the airfield their food bills and their launch fees – with transportation being paid for by their tour tickets and supported by the club. The club also paid for the soaring fees of our members, since we were unable to bring our own 2 seat glider to Portmoak due to maintenance and inclement weather (we were able to borrow Edinburgh University's ASK 21 glider: we would have preferred to bring our own, although we are very grateful to Edinburgh for the use of it). It is a club tradition not to charge soaring fees from our members for flying on tours.

Ticket income: £ 525

Funding from the Union + IC Trust: £ 194.78

Fuel (minibus): £ 211.46

Minibus hire: £ 396

Soaring fees: £ 121.28

Anti-Ice liquid for the Minibus: £8

Instructor's accommodation: £ 84

Instructor's check flights: £ 17

Total: £ -117.96

Improvements for the future:

This tour has been repeated many times by our club and is a relatively routine event. As a consequence, the organisation of the tour was relatively easy and the execution was quite pain-free. The only particular issues encountered from this tour were traffic on the back from Scotland and adverse weather preventing gliding on the 29th. These issues are unavoidable. It would have been nice to have a backup student driver for the purpose of the drive to Scotland. This is a flaw which the club has had throughout the last year due to its current makeup.

We would also obviously have preferred to bring our own 2 seat glider.

Photographs:



Gliding in the Snow.



On Bishop.



The launch site.

ICMC Winter Tour

2nd to 7th January 2010

North Wales

Attendees

- Joe Prinold
- Thomas Coyne
- Alwyn Elliott
- Lisa Alhadeff
- Alex Skinner
- Daniel Boocock
- Edward Poore

Day 1

Although each of the seven tour members were departing from different locations about the country, everyone managed to get to Gloucester for around 1pm on the 2nd January. From here we packed up the cars and headed off to North Wales and the St Mary's hut. The roads were fairly icy and snowy and so going was fairly slow. However, everyone managed to arrive at the hut around 8pm. A fire was started as quickly as possible to heat up the ice cold hut!

Day 2

The first day of climbing and the group split into two with Al, Lisa, Alex and Ed heading off to explore the local trad crags, while Danny, Tom and Joe drove up to the much famed 'cave of justice'. Although there had been some rain and snow the days before both groups had good dry rock and lots of good climbing was done.

Day 3

Conditions were a bit dryer the next day and everyone headed off to a nearby crag to try some multi-pitch climbing. That is after the hour or so of pushing the cars up the snowy and icy track outside the hut, with the landrover racing ahead! After a good while scrambling around and discussing (or arguing?!) where the routes started everyone managed to get going. For Lisa and Alex this was their first multi-pitch experience and they coped very well with Lisa leading the final pitch of her climb. After everyone was down in one piece Al and Joe decided that with an hour of sun left

they would attempt another route. What at first looked like a route in fact turned into a gardening expedition! However, only one piece of gear was lost and both returned down in one piece, albeit in the darkness.

Day 4

Rain hit overnight and so it was decided that bouldering was the safest option. A quick drive to Llanberis pass revealed the boulder field snowed under. That's when the mayhem began. Snowballs began flying from every direction as climbers found cover behind the problems they were planning on attempting. Some beautiful head shots were achieved by throwing blind over cover until Ed returned with lunch in the Landrover. The decision was then made to drive to a fairly far off crag on the coast where it was hoped that the weather would be better. It wasn't! Still some of the beginners managed to get their first experience of bouldering in the snow and a couple of the older members had a nice swim in the sea!

Lisa and Alex left this evening

Day 5

Again conditions were better and everyone headed off together. The first problem struck when Danny realized he was driving on a flat tyre! So the tyre was replaced and we headed back to the hut. Then on our way back out Al's car came a cropper on the ice and one tyre was slashed! With two cars hobbling we decided to head to the nearest city and replace all the damaged wheels. With lots of frustrated climbers itching to get on some rock it was decided to go back to Parisella's cave and attempt some night bouldering! This worked great with a land rover parked facing the crag with the lights on and some excellent climbing was had. After getting home to the hut the traditional roast dinner was started... four hours later at about midnight dinner was served! After everyone had woken up and eaten, a fair system was implemented to decide whom should wash up – the loser of a game of forks. The president, Tom was so keen to avoid the washing up, that he stabbed Al with the fork in order to ensure his safety from the greasy pans. Finally everyone went to bed tired but cheerful.

Day 6

On the final day we decided to try and get some more climbing done in the morning and headed to the local bouldering area in the Llanberis pass. Most boulders were topped with snow but a few bits were under cover and some decent climbing was had by all. Then we all headed home and everyone got back without incident.

In conclusion, the tour was a success. No fundamental changes to the trip organisation are recommended although perhaps a greater appreciation of the weather conditions could have been useful, both in the areas of travel as well as climbing conditions.

Financially, the trip made a marginal profit (£7!). We spent no money on accommodation, we spent £259 on food and a total of £250 on petrol. We received £167 in grants from the union and changed £50 for the trip

Climbing was done every day and an excellent time was had by all.



Tour Report – Imperial College Symphony Orchestra

In January 2010 Imperial College Symphony Orchestra (ICSO) toured to South Africa as the first full symphony orchestra to play in the Johannesburg International Mozart Festival. After being invited by Florian Uhlig, world renowned pianist and brains behind the festival, ICSO was granted a few days leave during the spring term and set to work perfecting the repertoire for the three concerts.

Duration of Absence: Thursday 28th January – Wednesday 3rd of February 2010.

Attendance: 60 ICSO members (inc. 5 non-IC members) and IC Director of Music, Richard Dickins.

Purpose of trip: To provide orchestra members with a once in a lifetime opportunity to visit South Africa and to perform in an International music festival collaborating with renowned professional musicians. Thus, improving the musical proficiency of the orchestra and presenting a valuable culturally and socially enriching experience.

Cost of Tour to Students: £355 (+£50 for Pilanesburg Games Reserve Trip)

Sponsors: Accenture, IC Union. ICSO also received a charitable donation from the Else and Leonard Cross Trust.

Outcome of trip: ICSO received a standing ovation after each of their three concerts, not to mention an unprecedented standing ovation prior to the interval in their first concert, which was reviewed as a “spectacular success.” All members were excellent ambassadors for the University and left a very good impression on both the host families and organisers of the festival. This resulted in an open invitation from the festival organisers for ICSO to return in future years. Subsequently, the orchestra has benefited from increased publicity leading to a boost in potential sponsorship from external sources. The ICSO members were generally agreed that the tour had fulfilled its ‘once in a life time’ tag. The tour could only possibly be improved by ICSO staying in South Africa for longer; however this is difficult as the festival will only take place during term time.



Tour Review

Never before has a musical society been given the approval of the Rector and all the heads of department to travel half way across the world for five days during term and give no less than three concerts, one of which was broadcast on national radio. At the end of January ICSSO did just that on its whirlwind tour to the Johannesburg International Mozart Festival, South Africa.

Last year IC Symphony Orchestra was invited to play in the Mozart Festival in 2010. The orchestra's conductor and director of music Richard Dickins originally thought the idea would be impossible and permission for the students to miss four days of college would never be given. Luckily the Rector agreed that the trip would be an amazing opportunity for us all. Thanks to the hard work of our excellent Chair, Treasurer and Tour Manager (Will Cowley, Leo Martins and Tom Budden respectively), as well as the festival administrators, the tour went ahead without a hitch.

Our eleven and a half hour plane journey (with a four hour stopover in Paris,) began on the afternoon of Thursday 28th of February. Thanks to the complementary drinks from Air France on both flights and their exemplary service we all made it to Johannesburg in good spirits, bar possibly the three people whose luggage was left in Paris and just made to South Africa in time for our first concert the following day...

Throughout our time in Johannesburg we were looked after superbly by our host families – most of whom were members of a local choir run by Richard Cock, the festival administrator– who obligingly ferried us to and from our rehearsal venue and fed and watered us until we could take no more. The day we arrived in the country, after briefly meeting our hosts, we went straight into a rehearsal at our concert venue, the Linder Auditorium at the Witwatersrand University in Johannesburg. The next day – that of our first concert – most of us were up bright and early with our hosts visiting the local African craft markets to do some haggling or at some of the prestigious museums in the city, such as the Apartheid Museum and Constitution Hill. The afternoon rehearsal was followed by a fantastic pre-concert dinner put on by the organisers of the festival for which we were all incredibly grateful. The first concert, with a programme of Elgar's "Cockaigne" Overture, Finzi's Eclogue for piano and strings Op.10 with soloist Malcolm Nay Elgar's Pomp and Circumstance March No.1 and Rachmaninov's Symphony No. 2 in E minor Op.27, went down exceptionally well with the audience – who even gave us a standing ovation after just the first half. Encores of Pomp and Circumstance, with audience participation ensued!



Many of the members of the orchestra spent the night partying out with their hosts, most notably Sam Leveridge and others who were out celebrating his 21st birthday to the extent that he was unable to make early start the next day for our safari trip to the Pilanesburg Games Reserve. Despite what was considered a late start for a safari by our guides (about ten o'clock in the morning by the time we got there) we were fortunate enough to see three of the Big Five game – elephants, lions and rhinos – and many other animals, not least of which were the giraffes, hippos and zebra. It was an amazing experience to see these animals in the wild. Once again in the park's shop we were all bargaining over the gifts we wanted to take home, before heading back to the park's resort for an amazing buffet lunch and a relaxing afternoon in the sunshine by the pool!



Monday brought with it another free morning with our generous (and very trusting!) hosts one of which allowed some of the more senior medics in the orchestra to borrow their car so they could explore the city some more by themselves. A car in Johannesburg is unfortunately an essential, as they do not have a public transport infrastructure as in London and in some areas it would not have been sensible to walk around as tourists. The afternoon rehearsal brought us our first meeting with the soloists for the evening, Lidia Baich (violin) and Matthias Fletzberger (piano), who were both without doubt fantastic performers. It was also a chance for the orchestra to get used to playing alongside a rock band, as the concert was entitled "*Rock me, Amadeus*". Another excellent meal was provided for

the orchestra and we all got to watch the most amazing sunset over Johannesburg before going in to play. The programme consisted of Mozart's *Symphony No. 5* and *Symphony No. 37*, followed by Mozart's *Violin Concerto No. 4* with Lidia Baich. The rock band then joined us to perform the *andante* from Mozart's *Piano Concerto No. 21* and then Saint-Saens' *Introduction and Rondo Capriccioso* for orchestra and rock band, arranged by Lidia Baich to round off the evening. Once again the audience loved the concert and, unbeknownst to the orchestra, it was in fact broadcast live on South Africa's Classic FM.



The members of the orchestra then spent their last night with their host families, giving gifts and cards and much gratitude. The following morning we set out for our final concert in South Africa in the township of Alexandra, just outside the city, in the local community centre. The audience consisted mostly of local school children who came up on stage to sit amongst the orchestra and got a chance to play some of the percussion instruments and to conduct. We played excerpts from most of our pieces, with Richard Dickins introducing the different instruments and getting them to play a little something to the audience. Highlights included a version of 'In the Jungle' for bassoon quartet and a mariachi band tune from the brass section. The entire orchestra loved playing for the children and having them come and sit with them – one of the young girls was so good at conducting that we almost didn't need Richard for the rest of the concert!

Before heading back to the airport we had the most fantastic end to tour in the form of a buffet lunch (once more paid for by the tour organisers) and pool side antics at the Johannesburg country club. Prizes were given out to the Tour Couple (you know who you are!) and Tour King and Queen amongst other things. The orchestra got an opportunity to say thank you to the organisers for our time in South Africa –Richard Cock, Florian Uhlig, Caroline Kennard and Samantha McGrath – and we even got an invitation back to play in both the Cape Town and Johannesburg Festivals next year.

There was not a single person who did not enjoy their time away; the trip may have been short but it was worth every moment and everyone is more than eager to go back. It is hard to describe just how amazing the experience was and how much fun everyone had just being away together on tour in a place so far from home. All we can do is to say another huge thank you to all the people that made the trip possible and looked after us so well while we were away.

If you would like to hear more of ICSO our next concert is on Friday 12th March at 8pm in the Great Hall, with a programme of Juan Pablo Moncayo's *Huapango* (for which we will be joined by IC Dance Company), Beethoven's 2nd *Piano Concerto* with soloist Shuang Wang (Medicine, year 6) and Holst's *The Planets*. Tickets are £3 in advance (£4 on the door) for students and are available from any member of the orchestra, or from the Blyth Centre. We look forward to seeing you all there!

Financial Report

Personnel

Paying Members: 60
Includes: 6 Cellos

Expenditure	Amount (Gross)	VAT (17.5%)	Amount (Net)*	Quantity	Total
Flights	£478.00	£0.00	£478.00	60	£28,680
Instrument Seats	£210.00	£0.00	£210.00	6	£1,260
Game Reserve	£4,800.00	£0.00	£4,800.00	1	£4,800
				TOTAL	£34,740

Income	Amount (Gross)	VAT (17.5%)	Amount (Net)*	Quantity	Total
Tour Ticket	£355.00	£52.87	£302.13	60	£18,128
Games Reserve Ticket	£50.00	£7.45	£42.55	58	£2,468
SymphUni	£5,000.00	£0.00	£5,000.00	1	£5,000
Union Grant	£3,694.63	£0.00	£3,694.63	1	£3,695
ICSO SGI	£1,500.00	£0.00	£1,500.00	1	£1,500
ICSO Patrons	£2,000.00	£0.00	£2,000.00	1	£2,000
Accenture	£2,000.00	£350.00	£1,702.13	1	£1,702
E&L Cross Trust	£400.00	£0.00	£400.00	1	£400
				TOTAL	£34,893

Profit/Loss £153