

## ICMC Summer Tour 2009

12<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2009

Costa Blanca

Members who went:

- Alistair Brash
- Simon Partridge
- Tom Coyne
- Brigette Atkins
- Joergen Myrtroeen
- Ed Poore
- Charlene Lawton
- Lizzie Wilkins
- Jacob Dean
- Jonathan Hazell

Day 1

Despite the 10 tour members departing from different airports throughout the country everyone arrived in Alicante Airport, Spain at roughly the same time (varying between 09:30am and 11am local time). The first port of call was the car rental station where two hire cars were collected. One being upgraded two stages for free because they didn't have the booked car, thus providing us with a 7-seater, dubbed the "win-car" for the rest of the tour.

A (theoretical) hour later with some exploration of the Spanish coast led to everyone arriving in the first villa of the stay, graciously provided by Joergen. Unloading and lunch ensued then reloading into the cars and off to the beach to find one of the deep-water-soloing crags mentioned in the guide-books. After some non-existent right-turns eventually an alternative was found and the fun began.

For many of our members this was the first time they had been deep-water-soloing, climbing without ropes above the sea, the day ended with a spot of tombstoning from the top of the cliff.



## Day 2

We traveled the short journey down the coast to Sierra de Toix to climb at a place called Toix TV. After spending thirty minutes driving around the maze of holiday homes, we finally reached the crag as it began to pour with rain. Climbing began, regardless, with several routes being lead including a 7a (very hard!) lead by Joergen. After this, Tom set off on a route –accessed via a dodgy rope bridge - but ended up climbing past the lower-off, resulting in a run out traverse and a scramble to safety!

## Day 3

We set off to Forrada in search of some quality climbing. Four hours later, after driving through continuous hairpins, we reached a track described in the guide book as “rough in places”. This was discovered to be something of an understatement!

The climbing at Forrada was fantastic and turned out to be well worth the journey. At least it was until the monsoon arrived and forced us to shelter in a cave for the next hour, waiting for the rock to dry. The heavy downpour turned out to be a daily occurrence and always coincided with Brigitte being stranded halfway up a lead. Joergen and Jacob managed to find some more difficult climbing in an area sheltered from the storm. One particular route (Starman, 7a+) provided them with conversation for the rest of the week. The journey back to the villa that evening was considerably shorter due to the saturated soil which allowed us to ‘mud-plane’ back down the track from the crag.

## Day 4

We headed back to the Sierra de Toix region but this time to Toix Ouest. Once again it rained in the afternoon (there is a theme here) so we went back to the villa for lunch. The plan for the afternoon was to head a short distance from the villa to Echo Valley. Unfortunately we got lost and drove half an hour into the valleys, ending up at a place that wasn't in the guide book but did come recommended by a woman in stripy yellow trousers (clearly a climber). The boulderers among the group made friends with a local man-of-the-crag who showed them the best traverse in the area whilst chain smoking.



#### Day 5

After the antics of the previous three days, it was decided we should take a rest day. We had a lazy morning by the pool followed by some deep water soloing in the afternoon. It was warmer in the sea than out, so we swam about before coming home.

#### Day 6

This was our first trip to Sella (the biggest crag in the area) and we were not disappointed. The routes were amazing. Tom and Brigette started a multipitch but true to form, when Brigette's involved, it began to rain as soon as they had both reached the first belay. After much commotion and a variety of problems, they both abseiled down to safety. Meanwhile, diehard boulderer, Jacob gets his head for heights as he takes his first fall whilst leading (after much bullying from Alistair and Joergen).

Fresher took a less active approach to the day and made a hammock at the base of the crag. His creativity got the better of him later in the day when he attempted to make a zip line into the swimming pool back at the villa. Fail.

#### Day 7

We went to Echo Playa and for the first time since the first day, the sun was out. Quickly, we realized that it was too hot and hoped for mild temperatures once again!

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Some of us went off to do 'traditional' climbing, whilst the others climbed sport routes. By lunch time everyone was far too hot, so we decided to go back to the villa for a siesta.

In the afternoon, Fresher had a brilliant idea: He built a raft from water bottles and set sail in the swimming pool. However, his success was short lived as Tom and Jacob bombed him, sinking his raft!

That night, we moved to a villa in the mountains. Whilst everyone was packing, Fresher managed to put a large dent in the car. However, he did fix it with his trusty plunger.



## Day 8

Jacob, Alistair and Joergen climbed a three pitch route. Joergen, however, left his shoes at home, so they ended up sharing two pairs between three people, swapping shoes for each pitch. In the meantime, Charlene and Simon completed their first lead.



That evening ICMC stormed Benidom! We saw the delights that were on offer, Sticky Vicki, The Mediteraneun Bar to name but two... We opted for the beach. Simon and the girls somehow ended up in the sea, partly clothed and Fresher got buried. ICMC returned home, distinctly weter and sandier than before and settled down for a nice bowl of carrot curry.

## Day 9

Back to Sierra de Toix again! Spurred on by the previous days multipitch, Fresher, Simon and Brigette set off on a three pitch excursion. Charlene climbed a route with a rope that was too short to be lowered off, so had to do some imaginative maneuvers to get down!

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By this stage everyone else was bored with Toix and decided to do some more deep-water-soloing, leaving Fresher and co halfway up their multipitch.



Day 10

This was our last full day of climbing, so we decided to go back to Sella as it was so good before. Tom and Ed managed to complete the multipitch that they got rained off last time. Charlene and Simon continued to tick off a number of lead climbs.

During late afternoon, there was a massive downpour which resulted in half the group running for cover and leaving everyone else to pack up all the gear.



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Day 11

The last day! The weather was worse than ever, it was raining when we woke up! We packed and cleaned the house before driving towards Alicante. When we got there it was far too wet to sit on the beach, so what would a group of university students do in Alicante for a day? Obviously we found the nearest Toys 'R'Us and set about trying to play with every toy in the shop!

In conclusion, the tour went very well. I would not have made any fundamental changes to the way it ran, things that could be improved in the future are small organizational things such as being better at buying the correct amount of food for a large number of people. Financially, the tour broke even. And a good time was had by all! The only thing that did not go as planned was the fact that it rained so often! But that being said, we went climbing every day and still had an amazing time.

## ICSE tour report - Speldhurst 2009



One rather soggy extended weekend on the 17th-20th July, fifteen members of the Imperial College String Ensemble made their way to 'that little wilderness village' in Kent - Speldhurst. Famous for its sausages and not a lot else, its main attraction was the home of our former chair, John Sandall, which had been generously made available for our use. Not that we were staying in the house itself - our accommodation consisted of a complex of variously sized tents contributed by members of the ensemble. I cannot deny that I felt rather apprehensive about this arrangement on the Friday morning when, looking out of the window, I saw a miserably cloudy sky and was told that the weather forecast predicted heavy rain all weekend! Even so, before long I was helping John load the most bizarre assortment of items into his car, from a leopard spotted rug and a didgeridoo to chocolate croissants and strawberries (which were, of course, consumed en route).

Once we had arrived in Speldhurst and unloaded the car, the three of us who had arrived early went on an epic shopping trip to prepare for the arrival of the rest of the ICSE crowd by train and car. One lesson learned was that of the 72 wheat biscuits we bought as part of the copious breakfasts, only one was eaten. On the other hand, we got through a stunning 24 loaves of bread and over 300 sausages over the course of the weekend! After teaching the lady at the customer service desk how to write a VAT invoice, we headed back to deposit the food, collect people from the train station and set up the tents. Ken seemed to very much enjoy being zipped up in a one-man tent and rolled around as though it were a zorb - not to mention making John think for a second that the tent was talking!

On returning to the kitchen, we were dismayed to find that Tommy, John's dog, had happily been guzzling on one of the four beautiful lasagnes that Toby had spent the entire night making. Thankfully, we were able to chop off the doggie bit and take everything over to the village hall for our dinner and first rehearsal. Nicola demonstrated her perfect pea cooking skills, and the cello section turned up halfway through making the second half of our rehearsal very bass-heavy! We spent some time in the pub, hung around in the living room while airbeds were pumped up and eventually headed outside to try out our new



sleeping facilities. Not that we slept much that night - there was a lot of gossiping going on in the girls' tent, and Jason and Sam went for a 'walk' at 4am because they 'couldn't sleep'...

Saturday morning dawned surprisingly bright and clear, and early on in the morning the cheerful sound of John's fiddling was to be heard in the pleasantest wake-up call I have ever experienced. One incredibly full fried breakfast later, ICSE split into smaller groups - while some of us rehearsed Purcell and Corbett in the living room, a few others worked on their cake baking skills in the kitchen, a quartet sat in the attic learning how to be a barnce band and the rest went off to learn the sacred art of barn dance calling. The latter group were able to practise their new skills when we had lunch in the garden, calling for a few volunteers to have a go at dancing out on the lawn in the sunshine.

As the weather became steadily worse and rainclouds grew in the sky, we decided to do the most sensible thing possible - we went for a three hour walk in the countryside. Led by the Fellwanderers president and secretary at the time, Nathaniel and Heather, we trooped through bogs, over stiles and across fields, making ourselves and Tommy muddier and wetter by the minute. Jonathan got very excited when we passed a field of llamas, and refused to say anything but the word 'llama' several times over when I called to find out what was taking him so long to catch us up!

Finally, we got back to Went Farm House, quickly changed into our barncing clothes and hurried off to the village hall to have dinner. We dined on a local speciality of Speldhurst sausages and mash, before taking away the dinner table and opening the floor for the barn dance. Everybody had a good time, including the people playing in the band - except Sam (now otherwise known as Clive) who refused to dance all evening even when half the members of ICSE tried to drag him bodily onto the dance floor! The people demonstrating their barnce calling skills did very well, particularly Ken who called his dance while wearing a very fetching wig. We also managed to sell a good many of the cakes made earlier on in the day - key lime pie, flapjack, carrot cake, cupcakes and a chocolate bomb which exploded before it even got to the hall but was still delicious.



The wake-up calls on Sunday morning were somewhat less pleasant than that of the previous day. While many of the campers were woken up by the dulcet sounds of a loudly blown didgeridoo, the few who had taken refuge in the living room were woken up by classical 'cheese' such as Elgar's Nimrod - lovely for a while, but cheesy enough to make Jonathan get up after 20 minutes to insist it be turned off! Once everyone had been dragged out of bed and fed another excellent fry-up, we were back in the village hall

for our final rehearsal before the afternoon concert in the local church. Our repertoire for the weekend was Purcell's Musik from Abdelazor, Warlock's Capriol Suite and Corbett's Alla Milanese, which were all very much appreciated by our audience (including a little girl who shouted 'More!' after every movement) who donated to the retiring collection in aid of Church Appeal. Some of the residents told us afterwards that we were as good as the classical recordings they listened to, and strongly encouraged us to come back again! They probably didn't notice Toby's rather fetching attire - having forgotten to bring along a pair of black trousers, he was forced to wear John's mum's leggings for the concert. Despite insisting on wearing a pair of normal trousers over the top before and after the performance, he eventually admitted at the pub that the leggings were rather comfortable. Hmm.

Possibly the most exciting event in the whole of Kent that night was the 'Great Johntastic Rumbustification', featuring a barbecue, a bouncy castle and lots of alcohol in order to belatedly celebrate John's 21st birthday. ICSE loved the bouncy castle, frequently piling on top of each other to thoroughly squish whoever was at the bottom. And of course, it wouldn't be a proper party without cello shots i.e. shots taken by the whole cello section. Don't think that Ben got off easy just because he doesn't drink, though - he was first made to do a shot of soy sauce, followed shortly afterwards by one comprising gravy granules. Warned by this, I decided to make a hasty exit when the words 'violin shots' were mentioned! The stars of the night were Hannah and Clive, who both fell asleep on the sofas and were drawn on with black eyeliner. Hannah also became the most awesome human Buckaroo as we piled everything that we could on top of her including lampshades and sofa cushions until she was completely obscured from view! Waking her up proved to be a bit of challenge, but once we managed it, it was very amusing to see her trying to find her way out whilst still drunk. It was a crazy evening, but like the rest of tour, thoroughly enjoyable.

Monday morning was somewhat quieter, as many people left early for work and the rest of us were left to pack up the tents and clean the house. We were serenaded by Pete and Ben singing Tom Lehrer and such things at the piano, and had our final breakfast in which we tried to finish off everything that was left over. Thanks go to Heather and Nathaniel for orchestrating the breakfasts, and to everyone else who helped to prepare food over the weekend. The tour was an excellent opportunity to rehearse together and become closer as a group, as well as raising our profile through our concert and the barn dance (which were both free and open to the public). Financially the tour also did very well, as it cost our members a maximum of only £40 for the weekend while the Union gave us money for train travel and fuel between Speldhurst and London, allowing us to make a marginal profit of £30 on the whole event. Given our success at touring in the UK, we hope next year to venture into unknown territory by running our very first summer tour abroad - watch this space!

Nikita Gandhi  
ICSE Chair 09/10

berlin 2009

## IC Sinfonietta IC Big Band IC Choir

1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> September 2009

### Attendance

Total number of participants 12

Full members of IC Sinfonietta 9

Not full members of IC Sinfonietta 4

Full members of IC Big Band 1

Not full members of IC Big Band 0

Full members of IC Choir 39

Not full members of IC Choir 2

### Financial Status

The tour received two grants and funding from the Blyth Centre (IC).

Blyth Donation	£00
IC Trust	£2229.7
CCSs Board	£129.4

Each participant paid £30 for the whole week including travel and accommodation. Those participants not staying the whole week and their own travel/accommodation arrangements were discounted accordingly.

### Objectives

Two of our primary aims as music societies are to further the musical experience and standard of our members' playing and singing. One of the most effective ways of doing this is through touring and performing in different countries to experience different cultures. Going to Berlin, in a country at the heart of the development of Western Classical Music, will not only achieve these aims but will also encourage joint ventures between these societies. In the past, IC Choir and Sinfonietta have never performed works for choir with orchestral accompaniment and, as some concerts in Berlin will be of this nature, it is hoped that such project will be undertaken at home in the future.

The aims and objectives were fulfilled whilst on tour. A total of 7 gigs and concerts were played/sung.

## **What happened...**

The tour started with an early start for many as those who flew from Gatwick and Stansted left London in the early hours to catch their flights. Those who flew from Luton in the afternoon had a bit more sleep! Everybody made their flights and arrived safely in Berlin.

Accommodation was in the Baxpax downtown hostel, which was in the Mitte district, right in the heart of Berlin.

All ensembles had rehearsal time throughout the week at the Humbolt University, where we had a rehearsal room.

Sinfonietta played two concerts. The first was on Friday night at the Gedachtniskirche. The second concert, on Saturday night saw a different programme and a different venue, the Marienkirche.

Big Band played three gigs. The first on Thursday evening at Pfefferberg. The second was at the Berlin Marathon on Sunday morning, shared with a local big band. The final gig was on Sunday evening in the Schlot jazz club.

Choir had two concerts. The first was on Sunday evening at Auenkirche. This concert included a reduced orchestra of Sinfonietta players providing the accompaniment. The second concert was on Monday evening in Sionskirche.

All the concerts and gigs were well attended and successful. The time that was not spent playing and singing was spent exploring Berlin, socialising in Berlins many bars and for some running the Marathon!

Monday evening saw the end of tour dinner, which was attended by all who went on the tour. We flew back on Tuesday and everybody arrived safely back in the UK.

## **Feedback from press**

'The tour was a great success. The concerts and gigs organised were all well attended and all three ensembles performed well. Berlin is a fantastic city with good food, beer and enough night life to entertain 130 students!'

'Tour was amazing. A week of just chilling with friends, playing and listening to fab music 24/7, oh and eating the odd sausage too! Everyone had some really great laughs and we all came away with some priceless experiences.'

'Tour was great! There was a rich variety of fun, culture and musical excellence and I was very pleased to be part of it!'

'The extensive sausage-eating and coffee-beer combining, not to mention shot-drinking, on tour was generally as ridiculous as could have been hoped for. From a musical point of view, I thought we turned out great. The marathon gig was hilarious and the final jazz club was the coolest place we've ever played. It was awesome!'

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