

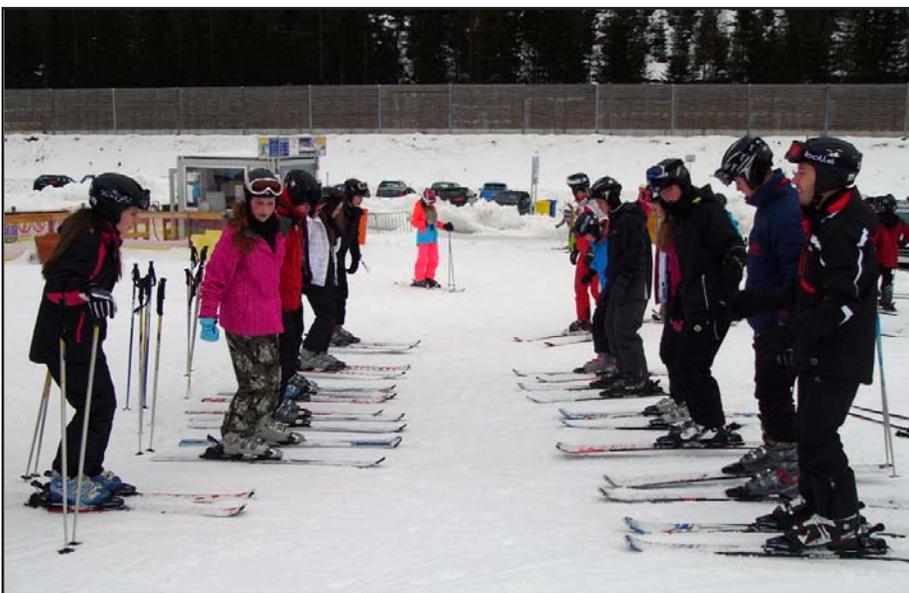
Heartbeat



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Issue 24

Students on a high after a week going downhill fast



Last month, staff and students embarked on the annual trip to the Austrian ski slopes. Among them was PE's Mr Burke, here is his account of the trip.

At 7.30am on Friday, 14th February, 80 students and eight staff gathered outside Upper Site waiting to be transported 1,000 miles across Europe to Altenmarkt, Austria.

Approximately 26 hours later we pulled up outside the Ennschhof Hotel, where we were greeted by our fantastic hosts, the Thurner family.

After unloading our luggage, we were straight off to get fitted with our skis, boots, poles and helmets. Then, it was time to return to our hotel to shower, change and spend an hour in the village, familiarising ourselves with the shops and supermarkets.

Having spent the previous 12 months getting really excited about the unbelievable

snow conditions we would encounter during this trip, I was more than a little concerned by the complete lack of snow at valley level. Indeed, it was so warm, the staff chose to take part in a little 'speed-caking' sat outside in the sunshine.

The following morning, we woke at 7.45am and were relieved to see there had been very heavy snowfall during the night. After breakfast, we prepared packed lunches. After listening to our information/instructions for the day, we re-boarded our coaches and set off for the nearby ski slopes of Flachauwinkel.

We were met by our ski instructors and leader, Marc, from the Eben Ski School and were put into our ski groups. Marc led the ten students with previous experience and they went straight to the top of the mountain via a chair lift.

The 70 beginners stayed in their groups on the gentle nursery slopes and, soon, the

fun that can only be experienced by spending your first time on skis on real snow was very much in evidence.

Skiing on one ski only was very much in evidence for the first hour. Then it was time to get both skis on and learn basic turns and stopping techniques.

After a fun-packed first day with lots of slipping and sliding and plenty of spectacular falls, we headed back to the hotel for our evening meal. This was followed by a night in, where the choice was to play sports in the hotel's own sports hall, or to catch up on some much needed sleep.

Day two saw us setting off for the ski slopes of Eben. One of the main aims of this day was to get everybody in our group to the top of a quite challenging nursery slope by using a 'button lift'. This is usually the scene of much hilarity and Mr Summerfield was ready with the video camera to try and catch those of us who



couldn't quite manage the co-ordination required and ended up on the floor in a cloud of snow.

Amazingly, there were hardly any 'victims' and we were soon witnessing excellent progress as our groups snaked down the slope following their leader and practising their snow-plough turns and stops. One group even managed to choreograph a 'YMCA' routine, such was their growing confidence and balance.

After returning to the Ennshof to shower, change and replenish our energy with our three course evening meal, we were soon preparing for our next night-time activity. Coach A set off for a session of bowling, whilst Coach B went for a walk to the brand new Therme Amade swimming complex.

Complete with lots of different pools, wave machines, diving boards and slides, one of which is a 360 degrees loop-the-loop, this is one of Austria's top leisure centres. It even has an outside pool which only the bravest tend to swim in, as night time temperatures can be as low as -20 degrees.

Day three saw us travelling to the magnificent World Cup ski resort of Zauchensee – home of Austrian superstar

Michael Walchhofer.

In absolutely perfect weather conditions with not a cloud in the sky, we were soon witnessing the majority of our groups tackling their first full 'blue' and 'red' runs.

Those students who were not yet quite up to the task were given plenty of additional one-to-one tuition on the button lift and long nursery slope.

By the end of the day, most of us were now beginning to feel like real skiers, as the excellent advice and coaching from our instructors was suddenly beginning to make sense.

The faces on our students as they stepped off the chair-lift for the very first time at the top of a mountain and realised they

were higher than the clouds in the valley and the aeroplanes heading for Salzburg airport were an absolute joy to behold. Even more impressive was their fantastic skiing ability in getting all the way back down the mountain in one piece.

On day four, we awoke to even more heavy snowfall as we prepared to travel to Altenmarkt. This presented our groups with an extra challenge as they attempted to ski in ankle deep snow for the first time. By mid-afternoon, some of the slopes had some gentle 'moguls' (small hillocks of snow) for our groups to contend with and it wasn't long before we were witnessing some spectacular crashes, as some of us 'caught some air' and lost control.

Mr Robertson produced an epic crash, when his new-found (over) confidence saw him zoom off at great speed only for him to come a cropper when he realised he was going too fast and he had to 'hit the eject button', before he ended up in the forest next to the piste.

When we returned from Altenmarkt, we dropped our ski equipment off and, before dinner, made our way to one of the highlights of our week, tubing. This hilarious activity simply involves walking 200m up a gentle slope, carrying a





large rubber ring. When you reach the start line, the idea is to sit/lie in your rubber ring in pairs or threes and then slide all the way to the bottom.

However, when you have Mr O'Malley and Mr Summerfield pushing you off at the start, it does not take long before mayhem ensues as the increased momentum causes you to fly down the hill much to the distress of Mrs Hewlett, Mrs Jones and myself, who have to act as barriers near the finish line to ensure no-one ends up in the middle of the next field.

Needless to say, great fun was had by all and, as always, it remained one of the talking points of the week.

Day five gave us all the opportunity to put all we had learned during the week to the test by taking part in one of the most eagerly anticipated events of the week, Race Day.

As we warmed up, our ski instructors set up the red and blue poles that would form our slalom race.

Complete with an electronic start gate and state-of-the-art timing mechanisms, it wasn't long before our groups were taking part in a highly competitive race to see who could complete the course, without falling, in the fastest time.

Considering just four days earlier, the vast majority of us were absolute novice skiers, there really were some incredible and highly skilful performances on show with

bronze, silver and gold medals up for grabs for each group. For others, however, hopes were dashed as they lost control and hit the snow with some pretty spectacular falls.

On returning to our hotel, it was time to prepare for our journey home. We went souvenir shopping in the town centre before returning to pack ahead of our journey home.

Following our evening meal, the ski instructors took part in our Presentation Evening, where the group heard the results of their race and received their medals and certificates.

To show our appreciation of the fantastic work they had done with us all week, we ensured each instructor received a generous tip from their group.

Day six, our final day on the slopes, found us at the resort of Radstadt. By now, every single group was able to take the eight-person gondola to the top of the mountain and, before long, we were zooming back down in near perfect conditions.

One or two brave souls chose to seek out the moguls that were forming and great fun was had as they shot into the air and then landed without falling. Others followed their ski instructors to the very edges of the pistes where little tracks and ridges had formed and attempted to ski over them whilst maintaining control of their skis.

As we finished our final session, it was time to say our goodbyes to Marc and the instructors before returning our equipment.

After returning to the hotel to shower and change ready for our journey home, we had our final meal before loading our luggage and preparing for the journey back to Crosby.

Some 24 hours later, we pulled up outside school to be greeted by our parents and families. It goes without saying, we were all absolutely shattered after the week of intense physical activity we had been through and were all looking forward to our own beds.

But, we all had our special memories and, whilst it was great to be home, many of us were wishing we were back in Austria to continue with our new found, or improved, skiing skills.

News in brief

Science Week starts from today and our students will take part in a number of events. There are History lectures at Manchester University today. Also today, Sefton Road Safety Team will give a talk at Lower Site from 10.30am and there is a meeting at 6pm for the parents of those students going on the French Exchange trip. A Gym & Dance Display takes place on Friday, starting at 12.30pm.

Samba band spring into action for Fairtrade



The College's Samba Band took to the streets of Crosby Village recently to support Fairtrade.

Head of Music, Mr Foy, said: "People stopped and staff came out of shops to

admire their performance, which was to raise awareness and attention for the Fairtrade stall.

"Yet again, the College musicians have made an outstanding contribution in the

community, this time supporting such a worthy cause. The Samba Band's performance caught the attention of local shopkeepers and shoppers, highlighting again the power of the arts."

Ivana comes up trumps

Our Art students have been busy this year preparing work for GCSE and exhibitions. Among them is Ivana Mendoza-Trejo (12S), who is pictured with her painting which depicts a fishing boat moored in still water with a cloudless blue sky above. Art teacher, Mr Daley, is impressed with the piece, saying: "The painting projects a mood of tranquillity and rest. The composition is simple, the main components being the boat with its fishing net, the sky and the water.

"There is no cumbersome detail to distract, no mysterious symbols or clever tricks but the effect is quite profound."

The painting, which has been given pride of place in the corridor leading up to St Edward Hall, was painted by Ivana as the final element of one of her two coursework projects for GCSE.

Last year, Ivana completed a very successful Year 11 and is now enjoying the opportunities offered by the AS course in Fine Art.

Mr Daley added: "The title of the painting, *And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him*, will be recognised by students studying St Mark's Gospel, as it refers to the response given by the Apos-



ties, Simon and Andrew, to Jesus's call to follow Him.

"This reminds us of the great sacrifice the two men made in leaving the fishing business, which was their livelihood, to blindly follow Jesus because the strength of his call was so great.

"This can bring to mind the fact, that the

word 'Christian' means 'Follower of Christ', and if we are true Followers, we

will see the wisdom of leaving behind the things the World tells us are important and move forward with the only person truly worth following, Jesus."