

Report 2

Getting Balled

Important note:

There are a large number of assets (photographs and videos) which I captured at the event, for the report and because this may be the last time I go for such an event. Many of them are published here.

While I hope that the readers do not mind their presence, if anyone has an issue with their presence in any photograph(s) or videos (or even otherwise), please let me know; either through Facebook or through an email to dm282@st-andrews.ac.uk and I will remove it for you. It is possible to update the videos independently to the document; hence new versions of this report may not be published for every change.

Hint: The full video can usually be found by clicking the thumbnail or picture in this document.

Also note: *The official pictures of the event (which were not available when this report was originally written) are now available [here](#), and their quality is usually better than what you'll see here, with unique pictures which I could not capture myself.*

Changelog

V1.1: Fixed some typos and errors, and a name misidentification (thanks to Ryan Gibb)
V1.0: RTM version of this report

Version 1.1

Compiled on May 5th 2019

Introduction

This is my report, analysis and experience for the CS Ball 2019 held by STACS.



MAY
3

SOLD OUT | CS Ball 2019: Steampunk
Public · Hosted by Computer Science Ball

★ Interested

✓ Going

...

🕒

Friday, 3 May 2019 from 18:00-01:00
Yesterday

📍

BEST WESTERN Scores Hotel
76 The Scores, KY16 9BB St Andrews

Show map

💬

Hosted by Computer Science Ball
Typically replies within a day

Message host

Prelude

For those who know me reasonably well, it would be right for them to feel surprised that *I*, out of everyone, was going for this ball. I am an introvert and find it comparatively harder to socialise with people; I would much rather work out some combinatorics than (say) sing or dance.

More importantly, I have never gone for any such event before. This includes balls, bops, proms (I skipped **both** my high school's equivalents) and anything similar. This makes scoring and reviewing this event all the harder because I don't have any reference to compare this event to, which wasn't the case with virtually anyone else who attended this event.

Now, keeping the above in mind, how did I somehow end up with a ticket for this event? Well, this one somehow caught my interest a bit. *A bit*. That does not sound much, but I normally throw any consideration of any ball or bop to the trash almost immediately, so to get a bit of interest was unusual, and I decided to go ahead and buy one. The cost was quite high – 35 pounds for dinner with wine, but it reduces to 20 if the wine option isn't taken, so I naturally eyed for that one (after all, I am a teetotaler). The afterparty (?) was only 5 pounds, but that sounded like paying something for nothing, so I did not consider it.

But paying money for these events, especially considering that they are non-essential, would usually mean a two-step process before I buy:

- Convincing *myself* that I should pay money for it – it is harder than it sounds
- Taking permission from my parents – after all, it is their money which I am paying for this ball.



In this case, I had to follow both steps. So I requested my parents to allow me to go for the event, but they did not respond in time before the first release of tickets sold out. There were over 120 tickets sold in around 4 hours; this means that a ticket was sold every two minutes – this is quite fast for a ball in my eyes.¹

Feeling slightly disappointed (but couldn't care less at that time), I simply continued as normal – and while I later found out that the second release would be in a week's time, I wasn't specifically interested in it.

Now fast forward a week. It was 12:58 pm, two minutes before the announced release time of 1 pm. I curiously looked at the page to see whether the ticket sale has been reopened. And it was! So I simply bought one, knowing well that I (could?) resell the ticket if I wasn't interested later.

That release of tickets was sold out in around the same rate – 29 tickets in less than 16 minutes.

I didn't care much about the fact that I had a ticket or do any preparation (what was Steampunk?) for the event after that.

Getting there



On the day of the event, I continued work as normal for most of the day, before hopping back to my room earlier than usual to prepare for the event. I should note that I was nervous in the morning, (jokingly) telling my classmates (some of who wanted a ticket but wasn't able to get it) to save me...

I got the tickets (why did they call that wristband?) the previous day, which looked like an envelope with a fancy key which I have no idea for why they added it.

I changed to my classic suit (the only one which I have) – this exact combination (minus the tie) was used for an interview just two days before, so it isn't that I am resurrecting this after sitting on the shelf for ages...

(Photograph credit: Alasdair Mostyn)

¹ Others told me though that a "[Christmas ball](#)" sold out in minutes – this I can't verify. While StacsHack did sell out in minutes, that event was free.

As for the tie, Raiyan Chowdhury did it for me and also lent me one of his (since I wasn't bothered to find mine). I didn't know what to wear for the ball, so his guidance on what I had to do was very helpful.

After that, us three went to the venue. It rained (and even hailed) while we were walking – I don't usually care about that thanks to my trusty jacket – but I forgot that my suit does not have a hoodie!

Once we reached the venue, I had to take the wristband out of the envelope and wear it. That explains the purpose of the envelope – seemingly to protect the wristband – which is a nice touch.

Pre-dinner

Once we reached the venue, there was some confusion at first:



After we went to our assigned seats, we realised that *there were free drinks?! I mean, you clearly said to bring cash for the bar, and here I am being offered free drinks? Then it dawned on me that they were sponsored by AMEX – and I should have realised it – as the seating plan had four seats named AMEX:*

Polina S	Amelia O	Mandy J	Jack S	Cristian V M		
						Crystal
Adriana C	Daniel M	Philip H	Mompoti S	Keith C		
Katherine F	Seamus B	AMEX	AMEX			
						Zepplin
Rachel S	Jamie B	AMEX	AMEX			
Fearn B	Rory M	Alice L	Conor J			
						Potions
Sophia S	Jack N	James C				
Saad M	Gonzalo G M	Kiril K	Marija N	Gabriele S	Jack D	
						Forge
Paul D	HyeGeun C	Daniela H	Blair F	Hugo J	Louise M	

It was now clear as to what was going on. But come on, I would expect some proper notification of that rather than confusing everyone at the ball... or was it meant to be a surprise? Either way, I found this unnecessarily confusing; moreover, I had no idea as to whether there were any restrictions (turned out that this was possible only before 9:30 pm or so, and I am sure that the bar earned a decent amount of revenue seeing the crowd who were eager to pay...)

Well, I simply had two drinks of orange juice (because what else?).

Now back to the seats. To start with, my name was mentioned in the table I was assigned to, which was helpful while searching for the seats:



And here's the pre-dinner environment:





Dinner

Soon after, the dinner arrived. The option that I had pre-ordered was listed as

- Main: Fillet of Sea Bream, Lemon & Garden Pea Risotto
- Dessert: Sticky Toffee Pudding With Vanilla Ice Cream & Toffee Sauce
- Wine: No wine ordered (£20 dinner ticket)



The sea bream (*left*) wasn't that much but was good – better than I expected. Others who picked the chicken option had the same opinion about their dish.



Then came the dessert. Now, I don't know what was in my mind when I chose the pudding option, but I wasn't expecting it to be a cake (*left*):

So I simply had the ice cream and gave the cake to Alasdair, who was more than happy to snag it from me.



Above: snap after dinner time. The audience didn't mind!

During that time, there was some (AMEX?) event for which I had little clue about other than the fact that I suddenly found myself in the spotlight along with a few others who were selected as representatives for each table. This was a drinking game. Basically, you were given a number (value of a card) and asked to guess whether the value of the next card was higher or lower than the previous one. If your guess was right, you pass. If not, you drink n shots (n determined by the number of people who passed before you plus 1).

Let k be the number of the previous card. Then assuming that only numbers were considered²,

$$P(X) \rightarrow \max(\text{low}, \text{high}) = \max\left(\frac{k-2}{9}, \frac{10-k}{9}\right)$$

So we need to maximise $P(X)$ ³; i.e, the greater of *low* and *high*, and it can be shown that the equilibrium occurs when $k = 6$. Anything higher and I should pick *lower*; else I should pick *higher*.

When it was my turn, the previous number was 9. So, I, aided by my analysis, picked lower, and it was the correct decision; the number was 8 (!). But I wouldn't drink anyway if probability let me down...

Addendum: Ryan Gibb let me know that the cards weren't replaced for each person, which wasn't what I thought. In that case, my analysis would work only for the first person.

After the dinner, we went out just for fun, along with others. It was a bit cold, but I was mostly just looking around and taking pictures; while also accepting (contrary to my usual guidance) to be taken.

Right: Scott (from AMEX) with the shots of drinks to the candidate before me. His guess was incorrect.



I intended this to capture the view, but Raiyan felt like popping his head in.

² Only 9 cards out of 13 contain numbers in them.

³ Some readers may catch the anomaly that $\text{low} + \text{high} \neq 1$. This is due to the format of the game – to illustrate with an example, if the previous number was 6, and I picked higher, the valid set would be [7,9] and [1,5] if I picked lower. The number 6 will never be valid (and the numbers can repeat being a full deck!).



Credit for the above photograph: Alasdair Mostyn

Yes, the tie is a bit off...



I wonder when this was taken...

Credits: Andrew Jason Wong (Lightbox)



Credits: Raiyan Chowdhury

Our heads are tangential to each other...



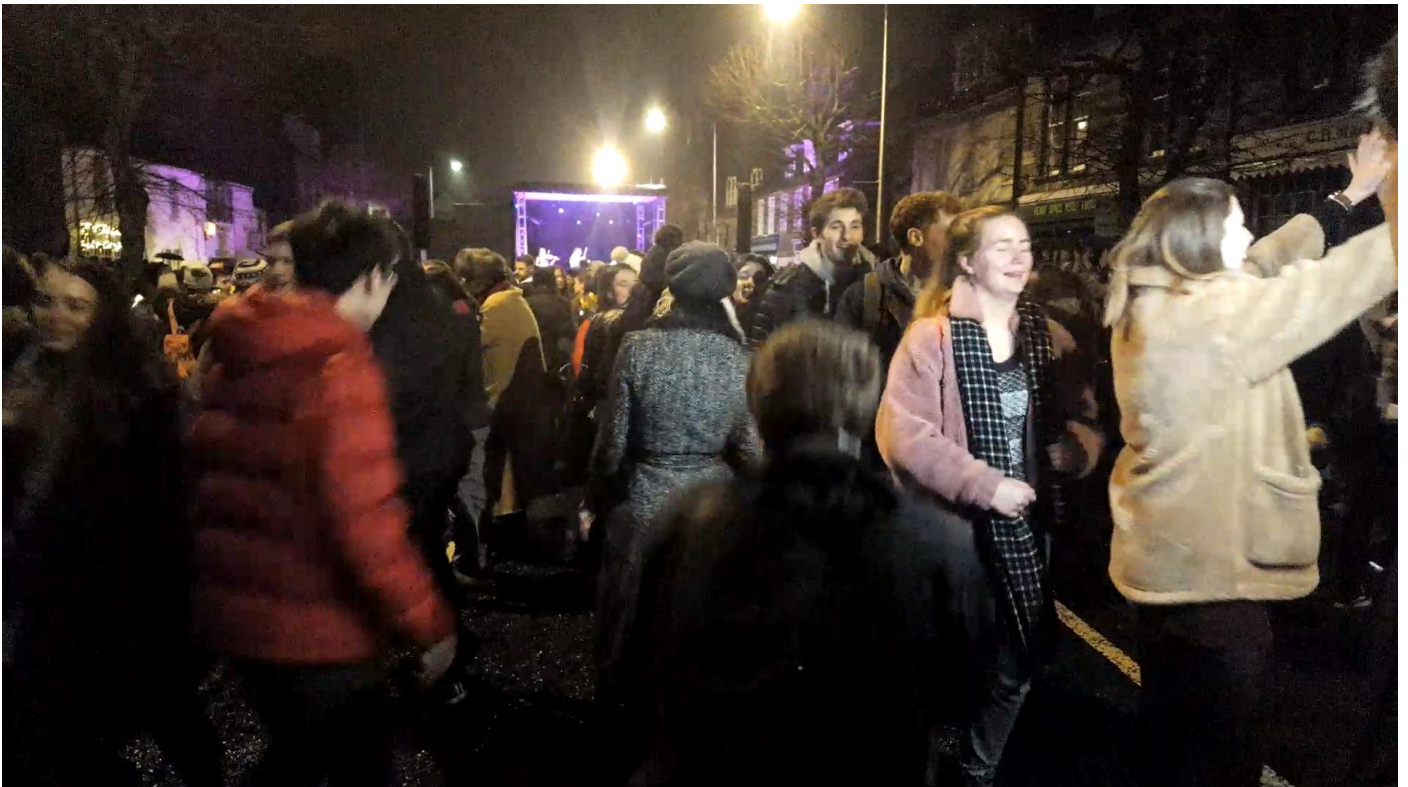
There were also sweets, placed there for no apparent reason:



Then came the ceilidh.

Ceilidh

I was wondering, before the event, what a *ceilidh* was. I thought that it was some random dance, but when I heard the music, it dawned upon me that it's a well-known Scottish dance – proved by the fact that I had witnessed it before – precisely on St Andrews' Day (December 1st 2018) (click below to view):

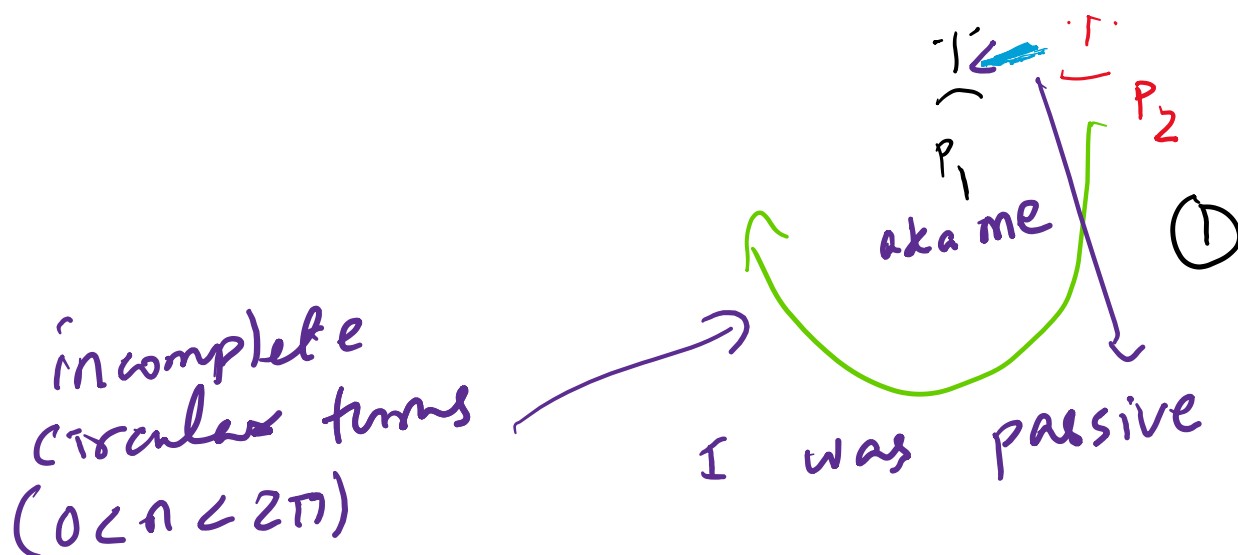


The equivalent scene at the ball was:



While the second photograph is focused on two individuals, I think they (or were meant to) depict the same thing...

Well, so what did I do? Basically, at random periods of time, execute assisted incomplete circular turns. My trajectory could roughly be described – using a crappy diagram – as:



I basically disengaged my hands. This meant that while I was passive, I could still be moved around by other people and hence others took advantage of that and made me execute a few turns.

Some clips of the ceilidh are shown below. There were over 6 of them, each with a different theme, and hence I only recorded a couple of them (as before, click to watch):



Then came the last stage.

“Afterparty”

I quote this because I don’t get the concept of one; once the party is done, you’re done. If there is an afterparty, then the recursive claim is to designate an *afterparty for an afterparty*, and so on...

Rant aside, it was mainly loud music (which was fine) with people randomly dancing to their tunes (a few of which had consumed quite a bit of ethanol already, so...)

This was boring and I was again passive, because what am I supposed to do?? For someone who did not dance, it was simply roaming around the stage. A clip of this stage is shown below:



Epilogue

I left at about 11:40 pm and safely took the night bus back to my room. I think the ball went till 1 am.

And some unrelated facts:

- I went to the toilet at around 9:30 pm, and the last portable toilet was covered in vomit (!!). Come on... if this was a bus or at the union you'd get fined quite noticeably (or so I'm told). No further information about that person is available here. That scarred my mind for a few minutes.
- During the dinner, they gave some tokens, which were literally blue buttons. Apparently, they could be used for free drinks, but this wasn't fully clear (particularly *when*), and I couldn't take any advantage (if I was correct on its purpose), which brings me to one of my previous points – some advance notice before the event would have been helpful.
- The official menu is available [here](#).
- I don't know what some of names of the tables (there were 8 of them) had to do with Steampunk; Zeppelin for instance reminds me of the dirigible/airship model rather than 19th century steam engines, though a search at the internet made sense.

Review

as with any other section in this review, keep in mind that the author is an introvert who did not know what a ball is before this one

My overall impression of this event is one which people felt relaxed and, in my view, was decent, though boring at times wherein the ball seemed incompatible to my interests. Though when speaking to others who are experienced ballers, they remarked that this was different and quite possibly one of the best balls they had ever been to, especially as the price covered a full meal. I'd tend to agree on this fact; most other balls cost around this level – if a bit lower with some exceptions – and *do* not include a meal. Good work on that. The bar tab (i.e, free drinks) is also something to be commended to – I'm told that they cost a lot on

their own – even though some advance notice on how it works was solely needed. That on itself would be substantial – and only CS seems to be able to get companies to sponsor their events...

But one would have to be quite relaxed and excited – which I *never* am – to get the best out of this. After all, 6 dances at the ceilidh? And the afterparty was boring. Fortunately, Nguyen gave me a combinatorics problem to try out, which killed some time for me. It's not that any social event cannot be interesting to me. The TPP pub quiz in particular was excellent in that the questions inside it were challenging – while providing free food and drinks (courtesy of TPP). But a ball is not intellectually challenging in any way – perhaps the opposite.

Now I know – at least broadly – what a ball is.

This ball will be the benchmark for any future balls or bops that I might go to – if I ever would that is.

Would I go again? It depends. I won't say no, but I will need to give it some thought.

But was it worth going *once*? Definitely.

Score

This event is scored on my classic 0-100 scale (v_2 ; mean $\cong 72$, $\sigma = 5$). Scoring this was difficult mainly because of a lack of reference points to use – as this was my first.

When scoring this event, I took opinions of others, especially for sections other than food.

The overall score for this event is **75**/100 (good). Individual scores are not available due to the reasons mentioned above.