

Liverpool Catholic Ramblers' Association

NEWSLETTER

Spring 2008 Issue No. 68
Seventh Series

Snippets from the Editor

This single sheet newsletter is to accompany your hastily printed new programme for the next six months. Learn all about our now sadly gone, but not forgotten, Albert, overleaf.

The usual six-page newsletter will appear later in May. A witty poem about a crackpot and recent a Seniors' Section write-up have been kept to one side for that edition.

I don't think that I should mention that our very own Roy Thiis had just celebrated his 50th birthday at Hoylake on Saturday 26 April. I had to go to keep a keen eye on many of that middle group of past members who were there.

The recent Keswick weekend was enjoyed by many at Lakeside House, with a lively social evening for those who weren't too shattered after some of the more strenuous walks in the gale force winds on the fell tops. At least the weather kept dry with the bonus of sunshine on the Sunday.

NEW MEMBERS. We give a hearty welcome to our new members, and the following have joined recently: Martin Maxwell, Danny Dwyer and Marie Dwyer. May you enjoy many years with us.

davenews@hotmail.com

Poetical Penmaenmawr

Today we went to Penmaenmawr,
The sun was shining bright.
As we drove along the coast road
It was such a pleasant sight.

We stopped at Llanfairfechan
For a coffee on the way;
Then we split up in two parties
With our leaders Roy and Ray.

We set off quickly up the road
And soon reached quite a height.
When we turned and looked around,
The coast had come in sight.

We could see the Isle of Anglesey
And all the coast below.
Roy pointed out some landmarks
Then we thought we'd better go.

The clouds began to gather,
As we carried on our way,
Across some swollen streams,
We thought we'd see some rain today.

The heavy rain the day before
Had made the ground quite boggy.
It wasn't very long
Before my feet became quite soggy.

We found a place to have a stop
While it was still quite warm,
As very soon, we thought
We could be battling a storm.

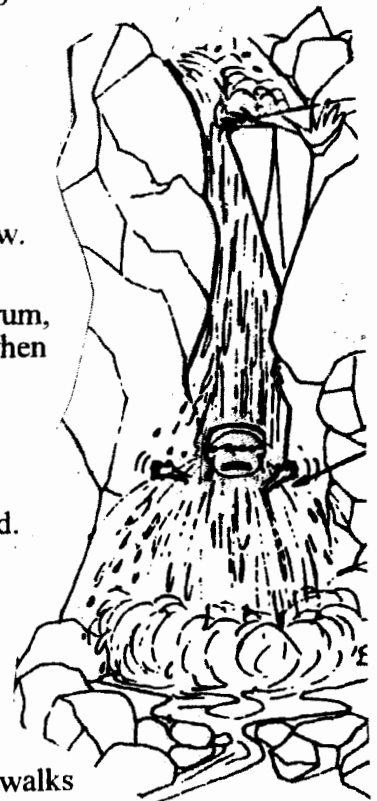
Well, maybe not a storm
But wind and hailstones too.
But we carried on and up,
Until the summit came into view.

From the top of Tal y fan
We could have carried on to Drum,
But that was for another day, when
The weather was not so glum.

The road back down to Aber
Was along the Roman Road
But what a disappointment
When we found the hotel closed.

Although we had a little wait
Until the coach came by,
It picked us up and took us
To another pub nearby.

After some refreshment,
We reflected on the day
And the pleasant well-planned walks
From our leaders Roy and Ray.



OBITUARY

Our globetrotting ALBERT DOWNING

ALBERT sadly died in hospital on St Patrick's Day, the day after his 71st birthday. We express sympathy and condolences to his brothers and sisters and also his nephews and nieces. His sister Vera looked after him during the past few months of his fight with leukaemia.

Albert joined our club over 50 years ago. Because of his severe hearing problems he had difficulty getting work, but he persevered and first got a job at a children's toy factory and then at a ship's chandlers in Bootle. Then, when he was 20 years old he joined our club and then soon began his many travels, all over the globe (but recording many of his adventures via the pages of our newsletter). The priest, at his funeral, reckoned that it was the many seafarers' tall travelling tales at the ship's chandlers that sparked off Albert's globetrotting and the resulting long tales.

Yes, Albert had a very interesting life of travel and reckoned he had gone a total distance of 1½ times around the earth! He eventually joined the Catholic Bush-walking Club of Victoria, Australia for over 20 years, finally meeting a young Austrian (not Australian) widow named Romana, whom he met in Melbourne. He then came back home again with her but she wasn't a rambler. He then restarted walking with us about 25 years ago from time to time – but Romana became ill and Albert was virtually committed to 24-hour care as her health deteriorated.

He then kept in touch with the club (through me, your editor) and sent regular donations of £10 or more to the club's funds and, in spite of him then being made an honorary member (free subs) he insisted on still paying his annual fee not only to our club but also to his past Australian walking club.

After burial did he go Down Under?

Eight members of our club attended his Requiem Mass at Bootle, where he was born. Like many of us, Albert had Irish blood in him, and to prove it he died on St Patrick's Day, as did his mother on March 17th 1950. *His father missed that date by 11 days, dying on March 6th when he was 72 in the mid 1970's.*

Typically, Albert had arranged and paid for both his funeral and the lavish buffet afterwards at the Liverpool Arms in Litherland, opposite the cemetery gates. His sister Vera was a bit disappointed that I was the only rambler who attended the actual burial and buffet, but I made up for it during those five hours by chatting to her and the numerous relatives and friends of Albert – some were nearly as chatty as Albert! Meanwhile I surmounted the buffet mountain and drowned myself in coffee (as I was driving).

When Bin Laden was top headline news I prompted Albert to put something about his past travels through Afghanistan in our newsletter. Albert's reply was that he would have to start his story right from the beginning. This eventually turned out to be his full life story from joining the club 51 years ago!

Albert (God bless him) was buried on top of his parents – in fact when his coffin was lowered into the ground there was a muffled bump. When we talked about this later that afternoon I said that it was probably Albert taking a short cut Down Under to say his last farewell to his Australian friends! His relatives

and friends all unequivocally laughed and agreed with me! *His many Australian bush-walking friends had been informed of poor Albert's demise.*

Earlier this year, after his health started to get worse, he told me that he would like to take one last long journey (to Snowdonia), perhaps shortly after Easter. Well, the good Lord must have been listening and granted part of Albert's first wish of a long final journey. Fortunately the good Lord rejected his second wish. This was that when he goes on this final journey he would like to take myself, Ken and Carol with him! May he rest in peace.

An extract from Albert's many texts:

Spring 2007: "Plan to get the train from Beijing to Moscow. I may have to wait until July 24 to confirm this. I will then join the Trans-Siberian train on the Mongolian Russian border to Moscow, St Petersburg, then leave for Beijing on November 1st, then leaving Beijing five days later. You could announce this at the club's Eightieth Anniversary Dance, Dave, when I will be on that train. Keep this a secret," he told me, "until the annual do."

Albert's final fling

Actually his planned epic train journey didn't take off the ground because of visa problems due to his ill health, but he did include a final fling to Germany, Austria, Australia and New York where he stayed at a hostel (600 beds) the biggest in the world, \$32 a night. He left for China a few days later before coming back to Liverpool and attended our 80th Anniversary Dance in person, sharing the dinner table with me and others including our ex-rambling member, Father Frank Johnson. His last trip was to Zakopane in November, with me and Peter K. when they had a freak deep snow fall. *(Report was in the newsletter).*

One of his very interesting best friends "Paddy" from Cardiff, who worked alongside Albert as a young overseas volunteer in Germany and then Austria, was at the funeral with his wife. I had a long conversation with them. He told me he would get to work on editing and producing Albert's autobiography, with a little bit of help from me, and then we shared email addresses. Paddy was once the late Jim Callaghan's secretary (or something like that) and also shared a London flat for a while with Neil Kinnock, etc. I think he is now a member of Cardiff's Council.

Many interesting extracts from Albert's globetrotting autobiography will now be published in most of our forthcoming newsletters. Albert wanted the FULL story publishing in our newsletters but it would take literally over 200 editions to do that!

ANOTHER OBITUARY

GEORGE RILEY'S FATHER also sadly died shortly before our Keswick weekend. We offer George and his wife Colette and family our condolences. May he rest in peace. *(George is one of our guitarists at our monthly Cheese and Wine nights, and at the recent Keswick weekend).*