

Liverpool Catholic Ramblers' Association

NEWSLETTER

Spring 2004

7th Series
Issue 44



New Year at the Ambleside Hostel – 2004/05

THIRTY places have been reserved for our club for a three-night stay at this palatial 'youth' hostel on the shores of Lake Windermere from Friday 31 December 2004, returning home on Monday 3 January 2005 (Bank Holiday). Many will know that we have stayed there several times. Most people staying usually book for the meals, but a few eat out or go self-catering, so note that this year there is a **compulsory New Year package** on the day of arrival (New Year's Eve) with NO SELF CATERING that night or for breakfast next morning.

This package, costing £39 overnight, includes:
New Year's Eve Evening Meal/Bufferet
Breakfast on New Year's Day

A Midnight Firework Display
A Hot Toddy
A Souvenir Calendar

Cost of accommodation for the next two nights, plus meals, is:

2 Bedroom £16.40 person per night
4 Bedroom £14.90 person per night
8 Bedroom (men) £14.40 person per night

Number of rooms available: 5 x 2-bed, 3 x 4-bed,
1 x 8-bed (men)

Meals extra: Breakfast £3.60, Evening Meal £5.20

Total cost for 2-bed for 3 nights including package, per person = £89.40

Total cost for 4-bed for 3 nights including package, per person = £86.40

Total cost for 8-bed for 3 nights including package, per person = £85.40

The club will arrange no transport, therefore before you book make sure you have transport to Ambleside. No bookings will be taken without a £5 deposit – bookings will close on 22nd November.

RAMBLERITE

OUR recent Keswick weekend saw nearly 40 members blessed with sunshine on both days, a few even staying an extra day. On the Saturday, while some enjoyed a ramble around Derwentwater, others sailed across the lake to trek along the Cat Bells range and even more groups took a short bus ride for strenuous ascents of Skiddaw.

The 31 who stayed at Lakeside House enjoyed superb meals with no complaints apart from the predictable "Could you sing quietly please!" while our talented musicians serenaded us at midnight in the basement.

On the Sunday, after a 9.15 breakfast (some were up early for the 8.00 Mass) Grisedale Pike attracted one of our keener walkers but the rest had a slightly easier day – some taking cars up the Honister Pass for Haystacks, others heading for Borrowdale via Friar's Crag with a select few veering off for Walla Crag, the remainder following the lake for a posh butty break – enjoying afternoon teas on the lawn of the farmhouse near Lodore Falls while watching several climbers roped up above on Shepherd's Crag.

On Snowdon, a week before the Keswick weekend, the 'C' walkers did a low-level walk near Llanberis Lake but the rest of us, going up the Pyg Track, were taken by surprise as we encountered several inches of snow for the last half-hour of ascent. In spite of this, we must have passed at least a

hundred other walkers (many with children) who had been up to the summit in the slippery conditions. On descending via the snowed-up railway track (summit café closed) to the Llanberis path, we were rewarded with a sudden break in the clouds and glorious views all afternoon, followed up by mugs of tea at the new halfway house café, opened last year.

It was a good day on the Stiperstones ramble, many of us having a pub meal at the end of the walk. There's no need to mention Pendle Hill as there's a full report overleaf.

Looking forward to the summer programme of walks, the forthcoming ramble to Baslow should include a 'C' walk on part of the Chatsworth House estate and is quite topical at the moment as the Duke of Devonshire (who owned the land) has sadly died this week.

COACH CANCELLATIONS – A reminder that we need at least 15 names in the book on the Sunday before the next walk, otherwise that coach will have to be cancelled – so we should all make an effort to book early. People leaving it to the last minute could mean cancelling the coach unnecessarily. It has been suggested that we could invite some of our friends (or neighbours) to try a ramble with us. But you can also help us to recruit more members by taking one of our posters for display in your library, etc.

Meanwhile, happy rambling.

Dave Newns

OBITUARY – MARK WALSH. Mark, who was a trustee for the club in the earlier years, sadly died recently. May he rest in peace.

Editor's note - Thanks to all who contributed this newsletter. Articles for the next edition to be given or sent to me: Dave Newns, 7 Abbotts Way, Billinge, Wigan, WN5 7SB



Cheese and Wine nights

including entertainment by our own musicians – “Free and Easy” plus Ken’s Easy Quiz with fabulous prizes

These continue to be popular, with over 30 members enjoying our recent May session and are held on the first Thursday of every month at the Ship and Mitre, Dale Street (upstairs).

NEW MEMBERS

We welcome all the lucky new members who have joined our ranks during the past few months. We hope that you will enjoy and share many happy years with us.

ENGAGEMENT

Sally Mason and Dave Parry got themselves engaged recently. Congratulations to both of you and may your troubles be little ones.

LOST PROPERTY TIPS

JUST a few minutes taken to write our name on the washing labels of our jackets, waterproofs, etc, with a ballpoint pen, will ensure that any lost property has a good chance of getting back to its owner.

Anyone who thinks that the ink from a ballpoint pen will wash out of clothes easily should contact their favourite washing powder manufacturer who will be delighted to hear the good news.

Putting your name on your walking stick(s) is also a good tip and if it has a cork handle you can write your name on that.

SMILE A WHILE

A Safari Park notice: Elephants please stay in your car.

Outside a second-hand shop: We exchange anything – bicycles, washing machines, etc. Why not bring your wife along and get a wonderful bargain?

Message on a leaflet: If you cannot read this leaflet we will tell you how to get lessons.

In a Counsellor’s office: Growing old is mandatory; growing wise is optional.

A question of pride or faulty compass bearings?

Actual radio conversation intercepted off the coast of North West Spain between Spanish and Americans, October 1995

Spanish: (radio background noise, crackling) – “Seniors, please change your direction, 15 degrees north, to avoid a collision.”

Americans: “We recommend that you change your direction 15 degrees north to avoid a collision.”

Spanish: “Negativo. We repeat: change your direction 15 degrees north to avoid a collision.”

Americans: “You are speaking to the Captain of a US navy vessel. We insist you change YOUR direction!”

Spanish: “Again, we must repeat – we recommend you change YOURS!”

Americans: “This is the Captain of the Aircraft Carrier USS Lincoln, the second largest warship of the North American Fleet. We are escorting 3 destroyers, 3 cruisers and numerous supporting corvettes. We are heading for the Persian Gulf to practise military manoeuvres. We order you change your course 15 degrees north. Failure to do so will oblige us to take necessary precautions to secure the safety of this ship. You belong to a country allied to the USA, please obey immediately.”

Spanish: “We are speaking from a lighthouse. There are only two of us. We haven’t a clue what our position is in the ranking of Spanish lighthouses. We are escorting a dog, a meal and two beers. We have the support of the La Coruna telephone exchange and are on terra firma. You can take the necessary measures to guarantee the security of your ship, but we insist that you change your direction – if you don’t want a collision with a LIGHTHOUSE!

No offence intended to any of our American readers of course! – Richie Cannon

NO MIST OVER PENDLE!

A LONG spell had elapsed (or had been cast?) since the coach last took us to Pendle Hill – witch country of Lancashire – the last trip being diverted to Wycoller, owing to foot and mouth, or was it those witches, fickle creatures, who had lured us back!

A different approach was made this time. Assuming a role of Witchfinder General, Roy Fletcher disembarked his large 'C' party at Clitheroe, aided and abetted by Dave Newns who had already started his 'A' walk at a car boot sale traffic jam on the outskirts of Clitheroe.

Roy's party was to skirt the west side of Pendle Hill via the dry ski slope, then onwards to Barley, while Dave had taken his determined 'A' walk stalwarts in the opposite direction on a marauding mission to attack that elongated hill in a pincer-like, witch-trapping manoeuvre to Downham village then over Pendle Hill to sit down for butties at Buttock.

Later, after visiting the old church and "Witches Galore" shop at Newchurch-in-Pendle – haggling for a bargain with the hags – the 'A' party ended their witch-hunt at the Barley Visitor Centre car park.

Meanwhile, that morning, with both the 'A's and 'C's disembarked, it fell on me as 'B' leader to guide our disoriented driver along tortuous country lanes around the south of the hill to Barley.

Comfort stop over, we started our ramble at 11.45 leaving that pleasant village which was entirely surrounded by hills. An hour later, we gained the summit of Pendle Hill "big end." It was a cold but clear day and the whole panorama of the Trough of Bowland lay before us, and behind us the three peaks of Ingleborough, Whernside and Pen-y-Ghent were clearly visible.

It was occasionally windy but the sun was shining ahead, beckoning us down to the idyllic village of Downham where the film "Whistle Down the Wind," starring a young Hayley Mills and the late Alan Bates, was shot, making use of a local barn. The current BBC TV series "Born and Bred" was also filmed there (shown on Sunday nights at 8pm).

Soon after starting our descent from Pendle Hill we met the 'A' party slogging up and Dave advised that a good path to Downham lay before us. Downham was coming into view and what a pleasant area it was.

Here we met a local old-timer out for a stroll who, on finding out where we were from, told us that he used to drive goods trains from Maghull after the war. He gave us a brief history of the Pendle witches and how they ended up being carted off to Lancaster Castle to be tried and hanged, save for one who cheated the scaffold by dying in prison! Local folklore blames them for causing the dip in the centre of Pendle Hill!

He said that you could enjoy "reet grand soup and grub" at Noggarth, a hamlet near Roughlee.

We arrived at Downham at 2.30, passing ducks on a rustling stream. We took a break in the village where we found a working Smithy – our friend told us that the blacksmith gives demonstrations for tourists.



We discovered that the Assheton family (involved in trying the witches, as sheriffs) have lived at Downham since 1558 and have done a lot to keep the village attractive, for example, by paying for overhead power cables to be dug underground. It has a pub on a hill overlooking the village, and a packhorse bridge that was only just wide enough for our coach to pass over.

Sadly, at 3pm, we left the restful gardens and Visitors Centre (including the old stables converted into rather weird public toilets) and headed back up the riverside path towards Black Moss Reservoirs where Steve's detailed local map proved very useful.

It was while walking in this most pleasant part of the Ribble Valley, with small hills surrounded by working farms in the vale of Pendle Hill, that I half expected to see Bilbo Baggins pop out and invite us to his home in Middle Earth. I recalled that, not far from here, J R R Tolkien, author of Lord of the Rings, used to spend his summers at Stoneyhurst College – so it is reasonable to suppose he got his "Middle Earth" inspiration from the area.

Having left our "Gandalf" friend behind, we got into Mordor and the Tower of Doom (aka Barley) at the appointed time, ie, just a couple of minutes behind the 'A's at 5pm, then we enjoyed a drink at either the Barley Mow or Pendle Inn, a favourite haunt of Billy Connolly, no less. Was it true he performs for Cheese and Wine nights here for local ramblers on his guitar and banjo? Now there's a thought!

On driving off, shortly after 6pm, I noticed old friend Pendle Hill silhouetted against a red sunset – a final goodbye gift of nature to see us on our way.

Richie Cannon



Have you got your club badge?

Obtainable on the coach
or ask one of our
committee members.
Just £2 each

Road to the Southern Cross

Part 3 of Albert Downing's trek across to the other side of the world

A brief reminder: Albert (now 67) who joined our club in the 1950's, soon decided to see a bit of the world by doing voluntary work in Germany and Austria. Little did he know then that his travels would eventually take him halfway across the world to Australia where he stayed for many years. He is back home now and is still writing a book about his travels but the book is now a few hundred pages long so it has to be considerably abridged for the newsletters.

IT was spring 1960 and I had just had a four-day break in Vienna with two other colleagues before going back to Linz, but soon we were sent to another camp not far from Linz where we did more voluntary work on building sites.

The weather was beautiful so at Easter three of us took a walking holiday in the mountains taking a train to Gemunden (in the Sazjkammerguts) and started walking along Lake Ebenzee until we came to Traunstein. There we saw displaced children living in chalets, run by a famous Swiss man. They were lovely children, all looked after by nurses. I still remember those children vividly to this day. After walking full length of the lake we took the cable car right up to the top of the Fueurkogel where there was plenty of snow and skiers around. That night we managed to get bunks in the skiing village high up on that mountain.

Next morning we had superb views so we started to walk down the snowy track, but by mid-afternoon the weather had closed in on us and was snowing heavily. It was hard going, but by a stroke of luck we came to a logging hut that was unlocked and it had a fireplace inside. We soon had a fire going and made tea, staying overnight in this nice and cosy shelter from the howling wind and blizzard.

Next morning was Easter Sunday and after having breakfast we decided to descend, after cleaning up and leaving some money behind for the loan of the woodsmen's cabin. The snow was much deeper now, and before long we were up to our waist in places, but after a short descent we could see the village of Ebenzee below and soon we came out of the snow on to the village track. Being Easter Sunday we called into the nearest church just in time for the 11am Mass and quite a vibrant sermon. The old church and ceiling was beautifully painted and the villagers had kept the church very clean. We then found a Gasthause where we had a good lunch of Wienasnitzel with potato salad. I just loved Austrian food.

That afternoon it was bright and sunny so we walked up through the forest and continued on Easter Monday, up the opposite mountain but below the snow line this time. Yes, Ebenzee was a wonderful place – I went back a few times. Not too far from there was Wolfgangzee which is famous for its White Horse Inn – the original one the operetta was based on. One could get a good meal and drink there.

Our short break over, we were now back at the work camp where each day we were sent to families who needed help with their house building. Sometimes we had to dig ditches ready for the first stage of the house. More often than not, as soon as the cellar was built the family would move in and they would carry on building above, only when they could afford it, sometimes taking about four years to build the whole house. We also helped with the painting and decorating.

There were also girls in the group, coming from many parts of the world. They did all the cooking and we had some superb meals that I still miss to this day.

It wasn't all work – about twice a week we would let our hair down and entertain the people of the camp. Many volunteers were students taking a year out before going to university. Some were quite musically talented and had their own instruments. German and English folk songs were often sang at the end of the evening. In some camps they even played a lot of classical music, but what surprised me was that many of the students sang popular hymns that they used to sing back home at their churches and colleges. In fact I not only got hooked on many of the hymns but also on some of their classical music.

The whole of May 1960 was spent in Haid, on building sites, then I joined five other willing volunteers who were needed on a family work group at another village – the group leader was a young American. And so it was that on a sunny June day we left Haid on a UNA truck to the village of Pucking to meet and live with a young family there in an old wooden shack – but more about this later.

Anyone interested can look at my copy of most of Albert's book, which he keeps adding to, or you can text Albert on 07941829030 – Editor

Seniors' Section Wigan and Haigh Hall

EIGHT of us met in the car park near Wigan Pier on a fairly typical March day. That being so we set off on a route march through the town but the nearest we got to an accompanying brass band was the occasional car horn and yells of skateboarders.

We got onto the path skirting the River Douglas and soon came to the new branch of Tesco's – some of whose customers obviously fancy themselves as "Way-out artists" judging by the numbers of plastic bags not so tastefully spread along the path and adorning the walls hereabouts.

However, things rapidly improved and we were soon walking through pleasant woodland in Bottling Wood. Without any prompting from Peter, the leader announced the lunch stop in a delightful spot. On resuming the walk we headed for the ubiquitous Leeds and . . . you know the rest – at Bridge 60, and we actually made it.

Over to our right Haigh Country Park was visible but our destination was Red Rocks at Aspull, also duly reached. We turned south here, passing some very prestigious dwellings – seemingly created out of previous farm buildings. The leader at this point was keeping a low profile as at the house meeting he had been heard to suggest that there was only a little ascent and with the usual mix of lawyers and philologists in the party he was hoping that no one would notice that there was an ascent.

The reward was not long in coming in the form of afternoon tea and proper toilets at Haigh Country Park. A maze of paths, all of which were probably suitable for our purposes, took us down to Hall Road and eventually to Bottling Wood and Wigan.

GEFA

Seniors' Section rambles

Great Barrow

THIS write-up starts with an apology, a cautionary tale and how a seven-mile ramble changed to a nine-mile ramble.

Our Hon. Sec. (Rambling) LCRA SS, noted that because of the Retreat, there was no ramble in February. With her renowned tenacity, one was 'tenaced' (guess who?) and every effort was made to contact active members, directions given at the Retreat, phone calls, etc, and if anyone was missed – apologies.

Great Barrow is a village south westish of Frodsham and eastish of Chester. The church stands on the highest point of the village, around which our first steps took us. The lane divides the cemetery – half in the church grounds on the left and the annexe on the right. Whether it is a case of 'them and us,' or the mortality rate rose when it became "Great Barrow," is open to conjecture!

Leaving the church and cemetery behind in peace, the lane leads to the village centre, passing the Village Hall and pub into Mill Lane. As the name hints, there was a mill here, but is now in ruins. The lane ends abruptly at a flight of sandstone steps up a bank, which can be ascended, leading into open countryside, but also into a biting wind, which negated what heat the sun could provide.

Across the fields the roofs of Tarvin could be seen, and once in Tarvin Bakers Way was reached – whence it came and whither it goes, I know not. It crosses the main Chester-Nantwich A51 (or 'dissects' it, as the guide book says!) and we checked that both ways were clear only to be startled by the shattering screams of a high-powered motorcycle appearing around a bend some 400 yards to our right. We urged our ancient limbs (not as nimble as in years of yore) to safely, and the motorcycle flashed past with a blur of speed, accompanied by a blare of horn, where we had been a few seconds before. Who knows who might be around the next bend he takes? Not the grim reaper, I sincerely hope.

As lunchtime was fast approaching (as advised by Lilian – again!) a comfortable resting place was found, provided by a grassy bank with a hawthorn hedge making a decent windbreak. Once settled and comfortable, the quietude was broken by a grinding of gears, gravel and teeth as two youngsters astride motorcycles sped by, leaving a spume of exhaust and dust. The next two intrusions were canine, taking their humans for walkies, and attempting to muzzle in on our repast.

After lunch, things quietened down to a normal run of the mill ramble.

We followed Platts Lane, a sunken green lane which was in medieval times the main link between Lichfield and Chester. This lane spans the River Gowy via a series of three bridges known locally as the Roman Bridges, but are in fact medieval. Beautifully shaped and made, they were built to last, and they have.

It was a mild afternoon now, as we turned with the sun in our faces and the wind to the rear. The finish was not too distant, but one last hitch – if the intended route were adhered to, the walk would be over by 3.30! A change of plan was discussed and an extension agreed, so the seven-mile walk became a nine-mile walk.

The daylight was waning as we hove to alongside our cars and as is now the norm, dinner was enjoyed at the Wheatsheaf in Dunham-on-the-Hill.

G.

Willington near Kelsall

TEN RAMBLERS booted up at the Boot Inn for an extra walk in January. Some had coffee first to justify using the car park, for which permission had to be obtained, or a £20 fine may have been imposed.

We set off along Cat Lane (*The Cat* was the original name of the Boot Inn) to Castle Hill where Kelsborrow Castle is the site of an Iron Age fort above Boothsdale. This took us to Waste Lane where we reached the King's Gate. From here we walked along part of the Sandstone Trail admiring the views, on this beautiful sunny winter's day, across the Cheshire Plain. A suitable place with rocky seats was found along this path for our lunch stop.

After crossing the A54 by Kelsall Lodge (originally a toll house) some set off to find the King's Chair, a rock formation in an ancient quarry. However, we were called back before reaching it, to take a path beside Hanging Stone Hill, called after another rock in the quarry from which deer thieves were reputedly hanged.

We passed Delamere School at the crossroads by the A556 – familiar, having driven that way earlier. The clapper of the school bell had never been seen since it flew off after the boys rang the bell so vigorously at a service to welcome home servicemen after the Second World War!

We crossed the A54 again and walked through fields to reach Primrose Hill Wood. Somewhere in this area is the 'Urchins' Kitchen,' a natural rocky cleft in the forest, supposed to be quite a surprise, but the surprise was we couldn't find it! Instead we headed for somewhere with a proper kitchen – Summer Trees Tea Rooms – where we were further refreshed for the last lap of our ramble. We were unfortunately just too late to visit Winsor's Fruit Farm.

Arriving back at the Boot, and having looked at their menu prices earlier, we gave the Boot the boot and instead drove to the Horseshoe in Kingsley where we were made very welcome and even treated to coffee on the house after our meal. MAL