

Liverpool Catholic Ramblers' NEWSLETTER

Spring 2003

7th Series Issue 40



Ramblerite

WE'VE had some memorable days out recently including two Welsh walks (Llantysilio and Anglesey). Paradoxically, one of the best attended outings was the non-rambling day to York, but we also had a fully-booked Windermere/Staveley trip.

Anyway those elusive Summer programmes are included with this Spring newsletter and a good variety have been selected to suit all grades for all the rambles. You will notice that there are a few Sundays where there is no coach. It has been anticipated that on these dates (due to holidays, etc) a coach would not be a viable proposition, but, on the other hand, if there is enough demand and leaders can be found, cars or public transport could be used on those dates, so keep your ears to the ground.

Most walkers needn't be reminded to use sun-bloc cream for the six hours or so that we will be exposed to ultra-violet rays on summer rambles. But even on the hottest of days it's important to carry some warm clothing in rucksacks, as temperatures can drop rapidly in mountainous areas.

So finally, with a good programme of walks ahead, come on out and enjoy yourselves.

EDITORIAL

IT would be great to get a few more members to write down their experiences of recent rambles for these newsletters, such as the one that Richie has done on Anglesey, or other gripping experiences such as Bob has recorded overleaf. Why not have a go, however brief the article.

As the new programmes have just arrived we need to get this 4-page edition out now, so I've left Albert Downing's globe-trotting adventure serial and other stories to appear in the next newsletter.

Dave Newns

New Members

WELCOME to all the following new members who have joined us recently. They are: Richard Hughes, Jim McNally, James Dempsey, Dave Perry and Maureen Molyneux. We hope you enjoy many memorable rambles with us.



Training for extreme conditions



WITH an adventurous year planned, a small group of our members decided it was time to consider some formal training. The question then arose: Where do we look and at what price?

After a number of enquiries, we drew up a shortlist of five possibilities: Plas-y-Brenin (the national mountaineering centre of Wales), the Scottish Youth Hostels Association, an offer in the Great Outdoors magazine and two privately-run companies - Celtic Horizons of Ullapool and Applecross Mountain Guides. The latter two on the recommendation of Neil Hinchcliffe, Mountain Rescue co-ordinator and leader of Torridon YH.

We eventually chose Mike Arley at Applecross Mountain Guides. Mike is one of 20 full time guides working independently in Scotland all year round - a renowned Alpine mountain rock climber, also a member of SARDA (mountain rescue with dogs assisting).

The course we chose was Scottish Winter Hill Walking, but with a slant to walking in the European Alps. It is worth noting at this point that we have booked an apartment in Chamonix in July for nine days at the foot of Mont Blanc and the Grand Cru. Also when you are reading this I should be on my way back from the Atlas Mountains of Morocco where I, with friends, will attempt the trek to the summit of Jebel Moulal (13,600ft).

So, with some trepidation, off we went to the Scottish Highlands for three days of intensive training.

The first day we started with a check of our clothing and equipment, the highlands being very cold at that time of year (February). We left our base at Applecross (which is situated on the west coast opposite the Isle of Skye) for Achnasheen. Climbing to the snowfield at around 2,500ft.

THE ICE-ARREST

The training then started for real; learning to walk safely in snowy-icy conditions with the use of the ice axe to cut holds (steps) in frozen snow. The edge of your boot when not as hard, tips when walking to save energy. The use of these techniques helping us instantaneously; transferring muscle aches away from the calves and spreading to the quads (above your knees). Following this, we embarked on the only chance of survival when you take a fall - namely the Ice-Arrest. This involved practising repeatedly falling in different positions - feet first on your stomach; feet first on your back; head first, stomach up - each time ending up with your axe in the correct arrest position - face down with your legs apart and your feet up behind your legs, and your legs apart. This is a very simple way to describe what was happening, but it was very serious, sometimes hysterical to watch as we practised the techniques.

After a short-break (around 3.15pm) a decision was made to climb a frozen gully to the summit. I declined this as I wanted to preserve my joints for the three days. Instead I had the pleasure of leading Mike's dog 'Bruno' to the summit (around 3,000ft).

With only Peter, who had previous climbing experience, Paco, John McDowell and Frank Hegarty, I thought they had done brilliant to reach the summit.

The climb involved first walking at an angle of about 60% on frozen snow, using ice-axe and compass to progress. Then climbing steeper till it was about vertical just below the summit plateau - a great achievement!

I have some photos I will show around. I am sure you will agree with me.

On the summit it was a sight to behold. It was a sunny February day with clear skies - the snow-capped Torridon mountains to the north, the Black Cuillin Hills of Skye to the west, as far as Ben Nevis to the south, plus the tops going east. We stayed longer than expected. On our descent led by Mike we encountered a number of snowfields, our training already coming to use. Eventually arriving back at the cars after 7pm. It had been a long first day.

Day two was of a more technical nature - no mountains to climb (poor Paco). It meant standing around practising knots; how to safely belay with your climbing partner; the use and positioning of climbing aids, slings, etc; the use of ropes, safely maintaining them, folding away, etc; safely securing equipment and packing rucksack so contents can be accessed quickly.

WINTER DEHYDRATION

There were lots of general tips on food and liquids to take with you. It is worth noting that in winter, dehydration is more common than in summer. We do not think we need to drink as much as in the summer, but this is not true. One-and-a-half to two per cent of dehydration affects your knees plus other joints. That is why we feel the pain on cold days. One of the best ways to avoid this is to take a litre of hot water with you. You can also mix juice or maybe an herbal tea bag for flavour. Coffee and tea can add to dehydration because of the diuretic effects. Cold water passes through more quickly in winter whereas warm drinks have a great psychological effect.

After a few hours it was now time to put into action some of the things we had learnt. It was to rock climb one of the local crags. This was around 300ft high. Mike led, followed by myself, John McD, Paco, Frank and Peter. Afterwards abseiling back down. Great for the nerves, I thought.

Day three had us down to the South Sheil ridge at Kintail. Very close to our last trip to Scotland. (*See last summer's newsletter*). Again it was an early start (8am) with a strenuous walk to start (around 3000ft). The snowfield chosen was quite steep. The object of the lesson to ascend, descend, crossing glaciers - always roped up with your standard equipment of ice axe and crampons on boots.

This came home to us with reports in the paper of a young woman falling to her death in the Torridon mountains (Beinn Eighe) after a slip. The feelings of the Mountain Rescue team were this was another avoidable death. We were also taught how to rescue yourself from a crevasse, or maybe someone else. This was quite

technical, not just a case of pulling someone out - safety always at the front of your thoughts. After lunch the next task was to climb a frozen waterfall. It involved the use of two technical ice axes, one in each hand of course. We were shown the correct use of your feet in boots and crampons. I am glad the photos are stills, I do not fancy being on one of those video programmes on TV. After the climb we abseiled back down to safety.

With our new found confidence, Mike led us on what must have been the quickest descent off any mountain I have been on. Using the snowfields, we

glissaded, skipped, skied, and generally bungled our way off. It certainly was good fun for a middle-aged group of men.

In summary we had undertaken three days of winter mountaineering. We crammed so much in, it is difficult for me to write it all down. We learned so much that if we never return to Scotland again the skills we have acquired will help us in our future walking whether it be in England, Wales or elsewhere.

If anyone needs any further info please do not hesitate to contact me.

Bob Carney

Anglesey - island of dreams and elusive paths!

A GOOD weather forecast augured well for our Sunday ramble on 23rd March and a coach carrying 34 happy ramblers sped off, eager to enjoy all the delights that the Anglesey coastal paths have to offer.

Arriving at the little village of Pentraeth, on the eastern side of Anglesey, the 'C' party disembarked, led by three generations of the Lyn Perrow family. Lyn had walked the area the week before. The 'B's were next to disembark, led by Ray McDruid, at Moelfre, whilst the indomitable Carol took her 'A's up right up to Amlwch to attempt a 15-mile coastal path back to Moelfre, negotiating, I understand, some marshy terrain en-route.

Wishing to recall fond memories of former visits to Red Wharf Bay I chose the 'C', but getting there was not as easy as Lyn expected. The week before, Lyn noticed the tide was out but this week it had the cheek to be in! So, where was the coastal path. She commanded the sea to recede to no avail. *Could this be the result of watching too many Harry Potter movies?* Undaunted, we proceeded over a stretch of rocks by the sea wall, then up into a caravan park, then a field and a tricky descent towards the welcoming sight of the Ship Inn at Red Wharf Bay. What a delightful spot to picnic!

We sat on the quayside enjoying the antics of folks messing about on their boats or dogs chasing balls into

the waves. Unfortunately, the heat haze blemished our sea views of the sea birds. Walking again, the cliffs began to look more imposing, but how do we get up to them? We had to do some more "rocking and rolling" on slippery boulders towards Traeth Bychan beach where, fortunately, no one was beached, along with the Thetis! At last a proper coastal path was found from here to Moelfre.

An easy final stretch, passing by ruined fishermen's cottages, got us there by 4.30pm.

Some headed to the pub overlooking the harbour whilst a few tackled the hot-dog stall just in time before the vendor closed.

With excellent timing, the 'A' party started filing in, so we all joined up in the pub to recount our day's experiences whilst awaiting Ray's group, which was last again - "Quelle surprise!" In fairness, he had problems with some of the farmers who had closed off rights of way, following the Foot and Mouth period, which he persuaded to be reopened, for right of access. Welsh Tourist Board please note!

Carol's party enjoyed the sighting of a dolphin, a sea otter, several diving and sea birds and many robins. I was disappointed at not seeing any ptarmigans or puffins. We were just a bit too early for these this year.

Thanks to the leaders for an enjoyable day out and very pleasant company.

Richie Cannon



Social Events



Note change: Now first and third (also fifth) Thursdays at the Ship & Mitre

May 1 CHEESE and WINE NIGHT, Music and Ken's Quiz

15 PIE NIGHT and Stand Up Quiz

29 BRING and BUY NIGHT - Bring and buy items to generate extra cash for club's funds. Ray Mc is auctioneer

June 4 CHEESE and WINE NIGHT, Music and Ken's Quiz

18 QUIZ NIGHT

NOTE: With these changes it is hoped that the club nights will be better attended. Please pass the word on regarding these changes.

MAP-READING COURSES - Starting Thursday 8th May (at 8.00pm): Ray Mc will conduct free Map-reading courses at the Ship & Mitre (upstairs). Contact Ray if interested.

Recent Seniors' Section rambles

Billinge - 16.2.03

THIS was a real home from home walk. Nine from the Seniors' Section met at the leader's home in convenient circumstances before setting out to conquer the highest 'peak' on Merseyside.

He was a little 'piqued' as the previous day's beautiful sunshine had given way to clouds but in all conscience he had little to complain of. We looped round the rather quaint Otter's Swift Cottage and headed north towards the ancient cobbles of Garswood Road and thence past the expensively restored Blackey Hurst Farm and out onto Newton Road. The footpath through Tatlock's Farm bends west and an hour after starting we stopped for lunch in a little dell with running water and seating for six on a strategically placed log. This gave us all an opportunity not only to satisfy the pangs of hunger but also to set the world aright and generally indulge in the well-meaning banter associated with LCRA over the years.

*So, this must be the part that George described
as having moist and fertile soil!*



We now headed on a path to Wigan Lane and then by another path, sodden and muddy and at the same time icy (all tastes catered for in Billinge!). We emerged at Longshaw and ascended the famous peak which had been beckoning for some time (Billinge Hill is a dizzy 179m - about 570ft high). The sun was now putting in fitful appearances but no, we could not see Snowdon nor even, for that matter St Helens, so we did have something to be thankful for. Actually we had much to be thankful for: pleasant countryside, good paths, excellent company and not a suggestion of a complaint from anyone. We descended to the Promised Land. Clearly nothing was promised and equally clearly nothing was forthcoming.

We still had nearly an hour of fresh air to enjoy before arriving back to enjoy some more of Freda's hospitality (and tea, etc). Thanks to everyone for a lovely day.

GEFA

Ribchester - 9.3.03

EIGHT of us met in the car park in the centre of Ribchester on a pleasant Spring morning. It was good to see Tony Thompson out after his long period of inactivity.

We paused for a perfunctory look at the ancient almshouses and Hospitaller church of St Saviour before heading towards Duddel Brook and its attendant woodland. It was the brook that caused our leader to make an involuntary emendation to the route, as the third footbridge he was looking for never materialised. A likely story, you say, but clearly there was no third bridge. We should have crossed the said brook across stones. Anyway it gave Marcia a challenge to which she responded with flying colours.

We were soon back on course again, passing Goodshaw House and Moor Game Hall before the final ascent to Spire Hill on Longridge Fell. Pity that visibility wasn't good enough for us to see very far.

We walked along the ridge towards the road and down to the Newdrop Inn, but the name didn't prompt our leader to do just that. A series of stiles and footpaths brought us to our final drop, a long invisible path with number of stiles on it bringing us back into Ribchester.

Not surprisingly, the Ribchester Arms is to be found in the village of that name and what a find! On that Sunday evening it definitely served the best roast beef that I've ever eaten. Pity that I didn't have about three doggy bags with me!

GEFA

Seniors' Section House Meetings

May 1st

Maria Evans, 9 Church Road, Hale

June 5th

Molly and Tony Roche, 16 Hillfoot Road, Liverpool 25

Seniors' Section Rambling Programme

May 14th (Wed) CHALET

June 1st Lilian O'Malley - 228 8496

CLUB'S CLOTH BADGES

for sale

Sew onto rucksacks,
hats, jackets, etc.

Just £2 each

