

Liverpool Catholic Ramblers' Newsletter



Winter - Grange in Borrowdale

FEBRUARY 2003

7th Series Issue 39

New Millennium plus three

About 24 members launched the New Year at the Ambleside Hostel, along with over 200 other hostellers and staff. On the last day of the year only the 'A' party experienced wintry conditions (on the Fairfield summit) when snow and bad visibility forced them to make a quick descent via Grasmere, eventually to catch up with the 'B' party. The biggest group was the 'C' who enjoyed a snow-free ramble around Loughrig.

Later we all earned a welcome New Year's Eve hot and cold buffet in the massive dining room overlooking Lake Windermere and the fells near Hawkshead.

The hostel's and other firework displays lit up the sky over the lake at midnight, and the early to bed rules didn't apply that night. Our waterproofs were tested on a more leisurely walk next day. Incidentally, sharing our New Year break included Bill Potter from the Seniors' Section.

Keswick Weekend - end of April

PROGRAMME CHANGE: The Eskdale Easter weekend has had to be cancelled. Instead there will now be a weekend at Keswick a week after Easter (25th to 27th April) staying at Lakeside House.

We've been to Lakeside House many times in the past. It's a very large guesthouse which caters specially for the needs of large walking groups, with a large basement drying room. Rooms vary from four-bedded (not bunks), three and twin-bedded to a few doubles and singles. There are also two surcharged en-suite rooms, a massive lounge and a basement bar that's used by us later on Saturday night.

Cost will be £58 for bed, breakfast and evening meals for two nights. Note: there's no mini-bus this time as members will be using their own cars. So ensure that you can get fixed up with a lift before booking. A £10 deposit plus remaining money must be paid beforehand (cheques made out to LCRA).

The guesthouse is conveniently situated on the corner of Lake Road and The Heads in Keswick. Manageress is Marion and the chef is her husband George. It is owned by the Catholic Holiday Fellowship whose committee includes our President Chris Dobbin. Note: Cars should be parked along The Heads as there are parking restrictions at the front door, with regular visits by Keswick's Traffic Warden.

Car Parking on Sundays

Because of the massive increase in the cost of Sunday parking (£12) at the Marriot Hotel car park, special tickets have now been negotiated for "ramblers only" using that car park on Sundays.

The tickets are obtainable through the club at an initial cost of £5 each named Rambler. It will cost £2.50 each time it is used, with a warning that if the system is abused, the concession will be terminated.

Editorial

It was great to get a few more articles and ramble write-ups coming in for this edition. Every member is invited to write something for the newsletter, no matter how brief your contribution. So why not get your pens or keyboards working to produce an article or ramble write-up for the next newsletter. Give material personally or post it to me at 7 Abbots Way, Billinge. Wigan WN5 7SB. Thanks. *Dave Newns*

Thanks for a memorable 75th Anniversary Dinner Dance

Several congratulatory letters have been received saying how very much they enjoyed our special evening. They appreciated the well made arrangements by catering for all tastes and thanked the organisers for their sterling efforts. Letters included one from Bernard Manley, a past club chairman and trustee, living in Nottingham and another from Monica Toosey (*nee Moran*) a past club secretary who's now renewed her club membership with us. Current members Pat Webster, Kath Robinson and Sue Cullen have also sent a congratulatory letter.

Bring and Buy success

The two recent Bring and Buy nights generated a total of about £160 for the club. Congratulations to all who contributed in any way, including our auctioneer Ray Mc. On these occasions Ray's not the man with the book, but the man with many books!

Summer Rambling Programme

A meeting will shortly be held to plan the Summer walks. If you have any favourite places or ideas that you would like us to include for the new programme just tell any member of the present committee to put your suggestions forward. Thanks.



Missing Photographs

Unfortunately, to my, and especially to George's annoyance, a couple of black and white photographs on display at the 75th Anniversary dance appear to have been taken away by someone else by mistake. They are thought to have George Skillicorn's name written on the back. One was of Mona Roberts' 80th birthday party. Please get in touch with myself or George if you find them. Thanks - Editor.

Hailstones above Hayfield

NESTLING beneath the west side of the Pennines at Hayfield, the start of our three walks, the weather was dampish but calm, with no noticeable wind - quite a reasonable day for rambling in the hills in February.

Some time later, high above us, as we 'B's ascended the well-trodden William Clough, alongside the mini waterfalls, in the wake of the 'A's, we were surprised to see a group of bikers peering over the edge. They must have come along the Snake Path from the road. The Snake Pass was blocked by snowdrifts two days later.

Then suddenly, less than an hour later, it seemed that we had just opened the door onto the North Pole. We were high up on the snow-covered Kinder Scout Plateau, battling against driving hailstones blown by strong bone-chilling winds.

When we reached Kinder Downfall - the huge waterfall - it was being blown upwards by the wind, but the rocks were covered in ice, so one couldn't get close to the edge to witness the full phenomena. The hail was interspersed with snow now, almost a blizzard, but we could still see the Kinder Reservoir below. I heard later that even Ray's 'C' party were getting their share of the hailstones by the time they reached that reservoir.

Meanwhile, high up on the edge of Kinder Scout we met other people, one group from Edale - we all had the same thought in mind - we had to get down below at the first safe opportunity.

Carol's 'A' group were well ahead of the 'B' and were descending near the Swine's Back. My 'B's were now descending down the Red Brook path when suddenly there was a flash, immediately followed by a loud clap of thunder. We looked upwards and saw the summit was now enveloped in a thick sinister cloud. It was snowing steadily now, but at least we were out of the ice-cold wind and could see the valley below. A short time later, after walking through a small snow-covered forest, we reached the reservoir, now incredibly bathed in sunshine, and walked back alongside the river to Hayfield.

Although everyone had witnessed Winter with a vengeance, I think most people out that day were glad they didn't miss the experience.

Dave N.

ALBERT DOWNING DOWN UNDER

In September 1963, young club member Albert Downing started a globetrotting ramble, visiting many countries and finally ending up in Australia where he stayed for many years. He's been back home for a number of years now and he's written the story of his long journey across the world. Look out for Albert's serialised adventures starting in your next newsletter.

Ramblerite

WINTER is now coming to an end, we hope, and we are already talking about planning our Summer Rambling Programme.

Looking back, on January 12th we experienced snow, ice and strong winds near Conway, and more recently we experienced wintry weather at Hayfield, but on average the weather has been reasonably kind to us on our other winter rambles.

One point that must again be stressed is that the leader is in charge of the ramble and people shouldn't go forging ahead of the leader and out of sight. This happened on a recent "A" walk. Let's face it, we are supposed to be walking together as a group and not as an individual challenge.

None of us expect that we will get separated from our group, but it does happen occasionally - we might have simply stopped to take a photograph in a forest, or whatever. If you do get separated then the rule is to stay where you are, and not go wandering off in all directions. The leader or whipper-in will soon notice your absence and will retrace their steps to find you. All members should also have the club's mobile phone numbers handy, in case of such circumstances, so that they can try to contact the leader. The numbers are shown inside your rambling programme.

Attendances have been up and down recently. We could do with more out on the coach and hopefully, as the days are getting longer, more members will come out of hibernation and enjoy the forthcoming rambles, shown below, with the rest of the "regulars".

FORTHCOMING RAMBLES

February 16 - AMBLESIDE. Leaders - A: Carol Kellett, B: TBA, C: Tom Reilly.

February 23 - LLANTISILIO and LLANGOLLEN. Leaders are available for this popular corner of Wales.

March 2 - SEDBERGH. Up the M6, the Howgill Fells are sandwiched between Cumbria and Yorkshire. Leaders - A; Dave Newns, B: Roy Fletcher, C: Tom Reilly.

March 9 - TORVER TO CONISTON. Spot the Spring lambs on the Lake District fells. Leaders of A and B will be found. C: Lyn Perrow.

DAY TRIP TO YORK (April 13). This proved so popular during the Foot and Mouth period, just two years ago, that we are revisiting the city. You can do your own thing or join one of our groups for a stroll around the walls, etc.

CHANGE OF PROGRAMME AT EASTER

See both notes elsewhere in this newsletter.

Dave Newns and I had a little tête-à-tête recently. He lamented the unrelenting paucity of suitable contributions to the Newsletter, undated was the dubious but totally appropriate word he used to describe the number of replies to his oft repeated Editorial pleas for material. Helpful as ever, I aspired to do my bit by submitting something informative, interesting and perhaps a little humorous, unfortunately this being a deficiency of mine, I've settled for something I'm more comfortable with, namely, an update on the occurrences in my garden.

Ramblings of a Woollyback.

A fleeting glimpse of a goldcrest last week, topped the recent spottings (and spurred me to write), the woodpecker has made a couple of appearances along with a grey wagtail and my old favourites the long-tailed tits are now daily visitors. Greenfinches, chaffinches and occasional goldfinches and coal tits, frequent the hawthorns now that I've resumed feeding them, the birds that is.

During the summer it's not necessary to feed the birds owing to the ample supply of insects and other foods, however the ungratefals do tend to disappear as soon as I stop, that is with the exception of the old faithfuls ~ robin, blackbird, wren, dunnock and great and blue tits.

The dunnock is probably the most miss-identified and overlooked common bird. It is usually assumed to be a sparrow (often called the hedge sparrow), it's behaviour, hopping about the ground like a wren gives the game away and on closer inspection a slender little beak, the mark of an insectivore distinguishes it from the wedge-beaked finch family, to which the sparrow belongs.

If you wish to attract finches you should put out sunflower seeds, peanuts attract most birds especially the acrobatic tits and an apple will keep a blackbird happy for ages. Robins love cheese chopped finely and suet may attract a woodpecker providing of course you live near trees. If you are lucky the thrush will make an appearance, once very common in the garden they now tend to frequent the parks and open spaces, though the presence of snails in a back yard could do the trick. So, if you want to see feathered visitors in your garden, yard or window sill, just put some food out and be patient.



Yet another talent

I have a drystone wall in my garden, I built it myself. It's not a large wall, in fact it's a minuscule wall and only vaguely resembles the majestic examples so often encountered on our walks. Nevertheless it's a drystone wall, higgledy piggedly it's true, resembling one left in the wake of a lost rambling group.

Anyway, one day last Summer, after a taxing hour or so reading in my Torygraph about the latest exploits of our masters in Westminster, I was pondering a difficult clue in the crossword and idly scanning the garden when I spotted a little brown something or other scuttle into my wall. Probably a toad I thought or maybe a mouse. Consumed with curiosity, I uncharacteristically separated myself from the armchair and set off to investigate. Peering into a gap in the wall, not an easy evolution for one of my shape, when the object of attention is so close to the ground, I discerned a little feathered thing stuck as far in as it could possibly go and desperately attempting to penetrate further. Fearing that my tugging on the delicate rear end of the bird would dislodge tail feathers, I with a little applied logic and great effort raised myself from my inelegant position and studied the other side of the wall. Sure enough, deep within a tiny gap a tinier head and beak peered back at me- thus confirming the presence of a bird. After



weighing up the options of: a) returning to the crossword or b) pulling the bird out, I chose a very cunning option c). Taking advantage of the very nature of drystone walls, which are free of mortar, I was able to move a couple of stones, whereupon a young Jenny Wren scampered out, dodged between the flower pots and flew off without so much as a thankyou~so ungrateful. The wall is now, of course (or of courses), just that little bit more higgledy piggedly.



Don't miss, in the next Newsletter, the incredible tale of the arboreal mouse.



Indian Summer on Cat Bells

(This witty report arrived just too late for the last newsletter, so now let's hark back to last autumn - Editor)



I AM quite selective about what walks I do these days, but Keswick always attracts me, just like a magnet to a flame. So I pawned several treasured items and booked the club's trip for the first Sunday of October.

Sunday morning found me with my hand stuck down the back of the settee looking for the loose change to finance the pub stop. Finding only three half-crowns and a florin I decided it might be time to invest in a new three-piece suite when resources allowed.

I do value the visit to the pub after the walk, for no other reason than to replace fluid lost through perspiration. With this in mind I optimistically stopped at a cash point on my way to meet the coach to try my luck with the assorted plastic cards in my wallet. The machine retained the first two cards I tried. The next two cards were spat out contemptuously. The library card that I inserted only reminded me that I owed eleven quid fine. Worryingly, the only success that I had was with my organ donor's card. I don't know which parts of my anatomy that I pledged after my demise, but I got twenty pounds for them!

Several hours later our coach pulled up next to a lane off the main road into Keswick. All those who had expressed a desire to saunter up the gentle slopes of Cat Bells alighted.

Loins were girded, and packets of boiled sweets passed around before we threw ourselves into the walk. After a short meander down the lane we came across a line of parked vehicles, all empty, the owners more than likely out for a Sunday stroll. The first in line was a rather expensive looking mobile home with a Cairn Terrier sitting in the passenger seat, left there either to guard that considerable investment or because it was an inveterate sheep worrier. As we approached, the canine guardian fixed me with its gaze. I couldn't distinguish whether it was giving me a warning or pleading its innocence but I managed to out-stare the animal and it looked away before I did - some guard dog!

The next car in line held even more drama. Someone in the group noticed the lifeless form of a robin red-breast with its head stuck in the radiator grille, sadly paying the penalty for not looking where it was going as it went bob-bob-bobbing along. It was sensitively removed with the tip of a trekking pole and consigned to the grass verge. I wondered if later that day a member of the RSPB would return to the car and bemoan the theft of its life-like robin car mascot from the front of his vehicle.

A short time later as we exited a wood, we had our first sight of Cat Bells, still one of my favourite walks in the Lake District, though this lovely view was now marred by thick white smoke billowing from a man-made fire in the next valley, the same smoke seemed

even more intrusive because of its stark contrast with the resident clear air.

The Chinese have a saying: "Even a journey of a thousand miles must start with a single step." I always have this in mind when I commence a hard climb. Cat Bells is not a particularly hard climb, but I find the start of that ascent is so well-defined that you make a mental comment of "here we go" before you take the first step.

Just over forty-five minutes later we were perched on the top of the fell looking out over Derwentwater towards Keswick. The Indian summer must have peaked on that day because people were actually sunbathing on the top of Cat Bells.

I enjoyed my packed lunch of larks tongues in aspic with pickled walnuts, and a banana, before we started our journey down. We descended by a route I had never taken before, one of those torturous thousand foot flights of rough hewn steps which always seem to make the descent seem twice as long as the ascent, but still, an enjoyable walk down to the lake just the same.

We were now having to increase our pace a little in order to catch the last ferry back to Keswick. The journey across the marshy end of the lake only possible because of a narrow half-mile long boardwalk that was a joy to walk on after the uneven paths we had just left. We made the ferry with minutes to spare and were soon gliding down the lake, absorbing the last of the afternoon sunshine. Tommy Reilly very graciously paid the ferry fare for everyone, and then spoiled the gesture by making us give him back the money. (It was only about 40 quid. What was all the fuss about?).

As we passed below Cat Bells I noticed a layer of smoke from the fire we had seen earlier that day hanging motionless in the valley, just like the cream in the middle of a Victorian sponge cake (eh?). A very odd sight. As the ferry made its way home we passed a small boat with a young man and two children sitting in the stern with what looked like his mother doing the rowing, judging by the girth of her forearms and the expert way in which she rode our vessel's bow wave, I guessed it wasn't the first time she'd been pressed into service! I half expected her to spit a gob of tobacco juice over the side, but it never happened.

The ferry docked and we made our way back to the coach - the end of a lovely day out. A thanks to Lyn for an excellent walk, well planned and well led in her usual relaxed fashion. I enjoyed my couple of pints in Keswick later that evening, after all they had probably cost me an arm and a leg - literally. *Scenic Cynic*

A couple of recent Seniors' Section rambles

Weaver Valley - 12th Jan

AN enthusiastic group met at Aston, including Bill and Cath, both inveterate travellers who would, I am sure, have been able to swap some interesting tales.

The River Weaver is entirely in Cheshire, entering the Mersey near Frodsham. It was made navigable late in the Seventeenth Century for the transportation of rock salt, discovered near Winsford. Rock salt was far from our thoughts as we set off in pleasant conditions in the general direction of Dutton Lodge Farm; that is not to say the direction was not very specific in the mind of Gerry.

Our route took us under Dutton railway viaduct, a most impressive structure with a surprising number of trains, one of which was empty no doubt because potential passengers had thought it would not run on a Sunday. We stopped for butties hereabouts, at Pickering's Cut which is in fact a canal wider than the Weaver at this point. Our route took us up to Bird's Wood, a lovely spot, and then to Birdswood Farm, a decidedly unlovely spot - well certainly when we arrived - which coincided with a communal visit to the toilet by the herd in residence. Hope you all cleaned your boots before going into your bedrooms!

A gentle amble across a meadow brought us in sight of Aston Church and our parking place. The subsequent meal was a wow; many of us won bonuses on scratch-cards offering discounts on meals, etc. That must have cost Gerry a few bob! And the food was fab.

Thanks, Jean and Gerry.

GEFA

White Coppice - 17th Nov

EIGHT of us met at the Lower Barn, Rivington, including our new member, Anne. After a leisurely coffee (and probably more in the case of one couple) we were all kitted and spurred by 11.30.

Pausing for a moment to inspect the village stocks that held the miscreants of yesteryear, we descended a brief flight of steps, crossed the road and were soon heading towards the Eastern embankment of Yarrow Reservoir.

After a little while Winter Hill came into view across the water but our route was along the Eastern side of Anglezarke where we stopped for lunch before heading in the direction of the gate at the Northern end. Here the leader offered an option; either proceed to White Coppice which, after all, was the very title of the walk or swing round the reservoir and start the return leg. Not a soul demurred: White Coppice, must be! No question! Perhaps it was the thought of afternoon tea or even ice-creams at the cricket ground but at all events off we set. I suppose it is unworthy of me to suggest that such motives could have had any bearing on the decision particularly as cricket iconoclasts know that the refreshment facility would be very much closed in November. Nobody complained; in fact, there were no complaints all day. Brownie points all round!

Returning along the Western side of Anglezarke, there was opportunity for a tea-break and remarks about how lucky we had been to enjoy such lovely weather and views. One non-romantic slightly marred our day-dreaming by wondering whether the car park would close by dark! Oh! But this was a fit and fighting group and we were all back in plenty of time. Mind you, had it been closed it would have given us something to regale our friends with for years to come!

GEFA



Forthcoming Social Events



Thursdays at the Ship and Mitre (upstairs) Dale Street

FEBRUARY

- 6th CHEESE and WINE with musical entertainment by Ken and Richie, plus Ken's Quiz
- 13th VALENTINES QUIZ with Chris Harris
- 20th THE WEAKEST LINK with Ray Mc
- 27th STAND UP BINGO with Mike Riley

MARCH

- 6th CHEESE and WINE with musical entertainment by Ken and Richie, plus Ken's Quiz
- 13th PLAY YOUR CARDS RIGHT
- 20th KEN'S QUIZ
- 27th QUIZ? To be announced later

MORE DATES TO NOTE: The first Thursdays in April, May and June are all Cheese and Wine nights. Thursday 17th April (Maundy Thursday) NO CLUB NIGHT (Club rule)

EASTER PROGRAMME CHANGES: The Easter weekend at Eskdale has been cancelled - no room at the Inn (not enough vacant space at the hostel either) but the following weekend there will be a Keswick weekend at Lakeside House from Friday 25th to Sunday 27th April - Details appear elsewhere in this newsletter. Consequently the Bolton Abbey ramble for 27th April has been cancelled.