

Liverpool Catholic Ramblers' Association

NEWSLETTER

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EDITOR GRABS MOUSE ON SKI SAGA

In this edition we have a report of our recent nostalgic Keswick weekend, plus two pages of our ski holiday saga - a change from reading about rambling - one from me and one from first-time skier Vanessa which highlight some amusing incidents, albeit several to my expense . . . "Well, anyone can make the occasional mistake," said the male hedgehog to the scrubbing brush! Life would be boring if everyone was perfect.

Vanessa put her stories on Microsoft Word and then attached them to her email for me, this enabling me to grab my mouse and do my editing bit, with her full permission.

I was also going to include a riveting two-page feature about a secret smugglers hideout, high on the crags of Great Gable, sent in by Gerry McDonald from the Seniors' Section, but, because of lack of space, this will now appear in the midsummer newsletter.

On the back page is Richie Cannon's exciting report of a cliff rescue on his 'C' walk.



I have often wondered why ram-blers spelt their title starting with a ram in front? Our problems are the complete reverse, as we sheep owe our present condition to a ram getting right behind us!

At least, as a result, you will enjoy all our lambs gambolling around during the coming weeks.

Thanks to the Seniors' for their usual detailed and edifying ramble reports.

By the way, it's Vanessa's first time for any of her reports to appear in print; but we also need more budding writers to jump on the bandwagon. All of your ramble reports etc, however brief, are a special lifeline to those members who can't get out on the walks but still love to keep in touch with everyone; and so get all your material to me by early June.

Now, as I am typing this, it is the Queen's real birthday (April 21). It was also my Mother's birthday (96) on Easter Sunday. Like the Queen, my Mother is celebrating two birthdays this year, but she won't be sitting on a horse for her "official" birthday! She will be sat in a restaurant surrounded by her offsprings and many relatives at Walton Gardens, Daresbury near Warrington, this Sunday, April 26.

Anyway, I digress, so just sit back and enjoy reading this newsletter.

Editor ☺

KESWICK – our Grand Finale at Lakeside House, 3rd-5th April

AFTER a lovely drive in the fantastic sunny weather we booked into Lakeside House. Fred had his own room while me, Les and Cathy shared our second floor room. A 3-course evening meal was provided at 6.30 after which there was no chance of making it to the pub until after a rest. Many made it to the Oddfellows later, for a relaxing drink and a chat.

Saturday morning had us all up for breakfast at 8.30a.m. and it was announced there would be 2 walks; A and C. The C were walking halfway round Derwent Water then onwards, the A were to climb to Great Gable. After packing peanut butter sandwiches, chilli chocolate crisps, snack bars and water, off we went. Cathy J went on the C and Les and I did the A.

Borrowdale forecast: Rain would die out by 10am

Nine of us climbed into two cars for the A walk at 10.30 and headed down Borrowdale for Seathwaite Farm. We were all eager, as Great Gable hadn't been done for a long time. Our A team were: Ann and Kevin, Dave N, Margaret Scotland, Carol, Peter K, George R, Les and me. We were in the heart of Borrowdale, reputed to be the wettest part of the Lakes. Well, it was still drizzling when we started the walk and quite windy too.

As we climbed, the wind and the rain became stronger and slowly we all became cold and wet. Not much scenery could be seen as we walked onward and upwards in the driving rain. Eventually we could see Styhead Tarn through the mist. We soon reached the mountain rescue post where we met other groups of fellow ramblers who were descending as the weather had deteriorated so much. And so we then made a joint decision to abandon the walk as we were all seriously cold and wet. The downward trek took about 1½ hours and we then drove to a ramblers bar in Borrowdale where there was a roaring fire and we joined many other wet rambling groups who were thawing out and became human again in no time. Just as we were leaving the pub, in walked the C party. They got a double-decker bus back to Keswick, but it had an open top! The rain had stopped but nobody ventured upstairs!

Saturday night and Sunday morning

After yet another filling 3-course dinner (and another rest), we trundled into town and landed in a pub. Shortly Richie was playing the piano with LCRA singing along. We then went back to Lakeside House where we went to the basement and continued the revelry. The band played and some of us got up to sing (or warble as it may have sounded!) But soon all were dancing and having a great time, some of the staff of the guesthouse joined in too.

Sunday morning was a late start with breakfast at 9.15 and a walk was announced to Castlerigg for those who felt up to it and had a clear head! Les, Cathy, Fred and I walked down the water to a café and had a scone and cup of tea. Then we left for home via A591 and A6; me and Fred taking in the lovely villages and scenery and Lesley and Cathy sleeping off the weekend in the back.

All in all the Keswick weekend is a great getaway and a good chance for walkers to get together and socialise with other ramblers they have not met before.



COACH REFERENDUM OUTCOME

The outcome of our votes is that there will be no change to the departure times, but now there will only be a 10 minute toilet stop en-route all year round, enabling longer rambling time, especially for the 'A' walkers. On several rambles there may be a stop at a café at the start of the walk, at the discretion of the leader – especially on 'C' walks.

It is quite important that you eat a substantial breakfast before a walk. I remember that on at least two past occasions a person has actually passed out during the first hour of a ramble, simply because they had not eaten anything, or eaten very little, that morning!

We shouldn't need reminding that food gives us strength and energy. If you come out in a rush, without breakfast, then bring something to eat on the coach. *DN*

BUT I SURVIVED. Do you have that book?

The above is a book by Tadeuse Slobewitch who was a survivor from Auschwitz where Helen Riley bought the book. Now she can't remember who she lent the book to, but this reminder may jog that person's memory. Thanks.



NEW MEMBERS

We give a hearty welcome to all new members who have joined us during recent months and hope you have many enjoyable years with us.

It was Grand National weekend when we were up in Keswick, so Flo organised a sweepstake. Richie picked a horse out that was 100-1. Oh help! He was the only one to ask Flo could he have an extra go. Unluckily his next horse was 200-1. He was disappointed. But it was just as well that he also hung onto his first ticket – it was the winner! Richie hasn't got over the surprise yet!



KESWICK

A panda was out on the piste!

ZAKOPANE was a winter wonderland for us this February. We didn't get continuous wall-to-wall sunshine, but the skiing conditions were superb with deep wall-to-wall snow!

Only my version of our saga is recalled here. Our panda's story (in black and white) is on the next page, so get your chuckle muscles ready folks!

The fifteen of us did most things in threes this time – three sets of lodgings, three grades of skiers (green, blue and red) and three casualties! We were also like a pack of 15 cards with three suits – no clubbing it!

Piste colour code: Green = Very Easy; Blue = Easy; Red = Moderate; Black = Difficult to V. Difficult.

There are lots of very easy (green) ski slopes in Zakopane which is fine for some, but if you want to progress further to blue slopes, there are very few in Zakopane. They are mostly red or black runs for the kamikaze skiers and snowboarders. However, the magic answer now is at Kotelnica, a fairly new ski resort just 13 miles away. Eventually six of us gave it a test run.



Unscathed 12, Casualties 3

Skiing these days is supposed to be safer than playing football, but we did clock up a modest injury list.



Early in the holiday, Vanessa fell over on a beginners slope, as you do, but before she could get up again, a young girl crashed into her and poked Vanessa in the face with her stick, dangerously close to one of her eyes! Luckily, a paramedic was shortly giving her first-aid.

(Vanessa's surname was Tilston and so didn't carry the Redgrave jinx!)

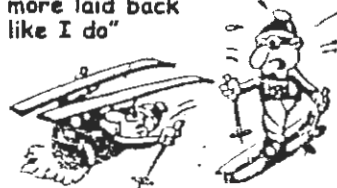
She had ice-cubes strapped over her eye for a while, but Vanessa was soon seen on the ski slopes with this enormous black 'panda' eye. It wasn't long before she finally put the shades on, but she still took that large 'panda' eye home with her nearly a week later.

I was the only one in our pack who stayed for an extra five days, and it was on the ninth day that I pulled out the joker. Meanwhile our other Dave had fallen on a blue run – his knee told him to give up.

Like most good skiers, I rarely fall over but this one was on a flat part of a blue run at Kotelnica. I was simply admiring a female ski instructor's 'technique' when my complete lapse of concentration saw me falling backwards suddenly (as if shot by a rifle!).

Bizarrely, I fell flat on my back like a beetle but on hard-packed snow. Luckily my trainers in my small rucksack cushioned the fall slightly but I still banged my head hard. This had nothing to do with the mulled wine that I had drunk earlier in a cosy ski slope bar!

He said, "Ski just a little more laid back like I do"



Was my brain at risk? Well, being a mere male, I don't think I have a brain! My back and neck muscles were strained, so next day I took the cable car up to the 6,200ft peak without my skis. It was a sunny plus 7 degrees at ground level, and tarmac was showing through the melting hard-packed snow for the first time that week – *more snow was due to fall though, as my sister confirmed a few weeks later!*

Just before the summit, the cable car was enveloped in cloud. It was a breezy minus 7 degrees at the top! Inside the café I met a Norwegian Dave Labeque lookalike. We then both put the world straight over a coffee and apple pie. I was back on skis next day.

Reading between the sheets

"Here's your trainers, Dave. You left them under my bed the other night," Lesley said. True! She shared a secluded apartment with Vanessa near their ski slopes. Three of us called in there in our ski gear on the way back to our hotel. It was just a quick drink, honestly!

The next week, after our gang had easyjetted home, I felt like Michael Palin, but wearing skis, looking for anyone who could speak English. But I soon met English skiers (and snowboarders) from Birmingham, Durham, and Oldham – two of them I recognised from last year! They came in March this time because it was much quieter and cheaper (*note!*). It wasn't long before the assistant barman in the Piano Bar was struggling with all those alien Geordie and Brummie accents. In desperation, he pleaded to an old 'regular' perched on a bar swing to translate for him – that was me! I surprised myself by giving him all their orders in Polish without even peeping at my phrasebook. It doesn't take long to learn a few words and phrases (about 10 yrs!). My secret is that I use a Polish CD.

Really intimate revelations

One night, after transferring from the Rooster Bar to the Piano Bar with several Benny Hill types from Norfolk, we were seen chatting up two gregarious Polish English teachers in their mid-20's. They soon revealed that they had formerly had several men, but they were both still virgins!! I believed them but the men taunted them saying it wasn't possible to be in a platonic relationship these days. The girls then got annoyed and said: "It was their Polish way of life. The majority of Poles were devout Catholics, and they all respected each other." The men still didn't believe them, but I did. What do you think?

Learning from a How to Ski book

A few weeks later (low season but good snow) saw my skiing sister there with Eddie (the Eagle!). He had never put on skis before. Ski instructors were touting for work, so they both got superb instruction and made rapid progress. Christine had done three years of skiing (about 50 hours of lessons) and now found herself doing the red runs at Harenda and Nosal. Eddie found a How to Ski book very helpful.

Dave Neunski

Skiing is the best thing I have ever done!

AFTER seven ski lessons on Runcorn's dry ski slopes, Lesley and I eagerly joined our throng of 13 at John Lennon Airport, all bound for Krakow, and on to Zakopane.

That night, on arrival by minibus, we dropped off Dave N, George and Howard, who were to stay at the Helios (*just 6 minutes from the Rooster Bar*) the rest staying at the Karpinski, except the two of us who were now off to our lodgings. Our place was a bit out in the sticks.

We were close to the main beginners slopes at Nosal, and got up early as we were so excited – our first day of skiing on proper snow. The day began with us struggling to get our skis on – only to be grunted at by the ski hire man who pointed at the frozen clumps of snow under our ski boots, preventing them to fit into our safety bindings with a click! Obvious when you know!

We spent the morning building up our confidence on the snow, and decided after lunch to meet up at the nursery slopes with Dave N, George and Howard who were skiing on the steep slope just above us.

I soon fell off the button lift near the top of one of the nursery slopes and had to be helped through the protective netting fence (which is not easy with long skis on!). Les was at the top of the hill with Dave who was advising on how to tackle the "small" hill. She bravely smiled as she pushed herself off, only to realise immediately how steep it was. The two of us fell time and time again, trying to conquer it and get to the bottom of the hill, with Dave, George and Howard patiently pulling us up – that is till Lesley managed to knock Dave out! As Les crashed into Dave she fell on her back, a very precarious situation, as Dave landed face-to-face on top! We all laughed too much to take photographs, but Les kept her eyes tight shut!

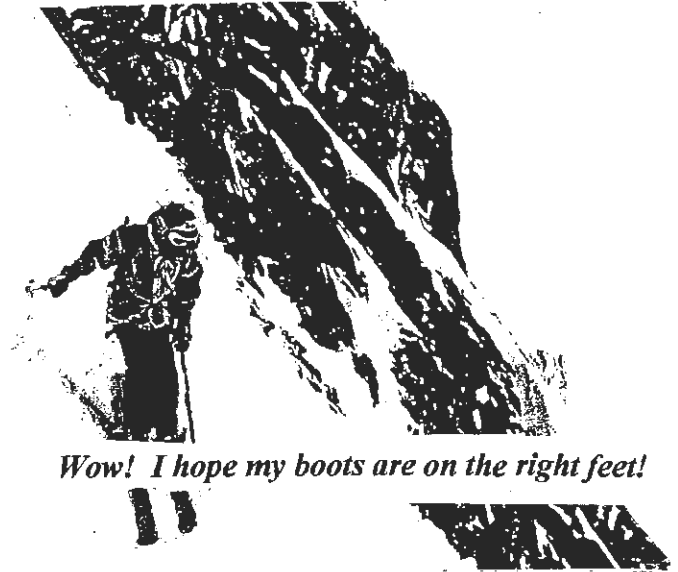
On another fall, as I was being hauled up by Howard, I was struck in the face with an errant ski pole (jokes of being hit with a pole by a Pole didn't go amiss!). The paramedic placed a lovely crepe bandage around my head with a cold compress inside – what a picture! And thus, my black eye was born. Sunglasses were in order during daylight hours but in the evening I was showing my black eye in all its differing shades!

As the week progressed, our confidence grew and with the patience of Dave N, George and Howard, who occasionally joined us, we started skiing with a passion and drinking to match of an evening when we generally ended up at the Piano Bar. Mid-holiday, five of us moved hotel to be all together at the Adria, near the town centre.

After breakfast we were sitting in the palatial reception area waiting for our taxi to take us to one of the ski slopes when Dave must have had a bad night, as he was seen struggling hard to fasten his comfy Swiss ski boots which he had recently got on Ebay for £32.50 (*cost £450 new*).

Zakopane's Nosal

The steepest ski slope in Poland



Wow! I hope my boots are on the right feet!

This was like me, your editor, four years ago, testing out Zakopane's ski slopes. Nosal's steepness took me totally by surprise. Most skiers get the ski lift to half way up where it is less steep. I got down without mishap but then needed a strong mulled wine at the ski slope cafe! I haven't had the bottle to it again – yet!

Well, I soon spotted that he had put them on the wrong feet and was now endeavouring to fasten them with the clips on the inside! And we were trusting ourselves skiing with this man???

The snow in Zakopane was like nothing I had ever seen before and brought out the child in us and on was particular walk home from the Piano bar, Les and I sleighed without a sleigh down a hill close to our hotel then proceeded to make snow angels, we then couldn't get back up the hill as it was too slippery with the snow. We joined the Karpinski crowd on Sunday night as Irene had rustled up a quiz. Eventually Ray Mc emerged as the winner. The prize? He won and had to don a fabulous multi-coloured wig, which was then seen on various ski slopes for the rest of the week – a great night.

The last day was spent at Kotelnica where we had long runs. Les and I had progressed to blue runs, none of that nursery slopes for us! We skied like professionals (or so we thought!). It was a fabulous day, a fantastic end to a fantastic week. It was a real shame that we all had to go home, well all except Dave N who continued on for a further week. All 15 of us met at different times during the week and we laughed so much. I personally can't wait for next year, skiing is the best thing I have ever done – well until 4th May when we're off to Turkey sailing that is.

ROY'S RECENT RAMBLE

As there was no coach ramble on Easter Sunday, Roy organised a successful walk around Neston which had a good turnout. He was going to finish off at a chippy but they had a proper meal instead.

Sadly, Roy's Aunt had passed away peacefully in her sleep at Roy's house 6 days before (RIP) but Roy valiantly turned out to lead his walk. We offer our sincere sympathy and condolences, Roy.

A FINE DAY FOR CONISTON – April 19th

A full coach saw Jim Langton, Roy and Ray Mc leading walks in the Coniston area. Incidentally, they left for home at 6.30 on the dot, keeping to the referendum's recent decision to leave by 6.30.

SUMMER HOLIDAYS – ZAKOPANE?

According to what we hear, most people are not travelling abroad this year for a holiday. Yet just checking on the internet it seems that the daily flights to Krakow (Zakopane) from Liverpool by Easyjet are heavily booked right up to October with some already costing well over £100 return. They must be half full of Polish people, I think.

There is some talk of a possible trip to Slovenia this year – not to be confused with Slovakia which is 40 minutes by minibus from Zakopane or 20 minutes to the mountain ridge border by cable car. Slovenia is 500 miles south, just above Greece.

Anyway, I am thinking of going to Zakopane on Wednesday, Sept 2 to Friday, Sept 11 (9 days). Those dates are cheapest flights at £61.98 return. You can save another £16 if you travel light. I will be booking about the end of April. If anyone else is interested in those dates. The beer is still only £1 for a large one! Not that any of us imbibe too much on holiday! Accommodation is still as little as £10 per night (low season) sharing a room at the Magnolia for B&B. – Dave Newns.

THANKS FOR SURPRISE PARTY

Dave Dickel wishes to thank everyone for making his surprise 60th birthday party so enjoyable. It was a complete surprise! And he thanks everyone for all the cards and presents.

Seniors' Section ramble report

BURWALDSLEY

Leaders: Marcia and Tony – 8 March

The meet was at the Sandstone Trail car park, the full compliment being, alphabetically, Anne, Audrey P, Freda, Ita, Sue, Lilian, George P, Harry and yours truly.

The first business of the day was to congratulate Harry upon being presented with his first grandsons Benjamin Edward and Finlay Harris, and Aunt Helen with her first nephews, by Martin and Siobhan. Well done, Mum and Dad! Photographs were proudly presented of babies doing what babies do – feeding and sleeping but beautifully.

We soon escaped the tarmac and were treading God's earth, which had just been ploughed – in fact the farmer was spotted still ploughing the upper reaches of the field.



As we were entering an adjacent meadow, rain seemed to start falling, and it was at this juncture, whilst putting on rain gear and hoisting up umbrellas, that we acquired pink panthers – three of them!

Now I willingly hold up my hands and admit that after our post ramble ritual I may have noticed one or two pink elephants – but panthers, never – although later on I became concerned when coming upon a cottage named 'Elephant Crossing! – but back to our new friends.

I would have expected three panthers, whatever their hue, to be wearing, collectively, twelve boots, but only six were visible, for encloded within these pink shrouds were Sue, Lilian and Anne!

The route took us anti-clockwise around the base of Peckforton Hill and its ruined castle, which frowned down upon us my earlier confession!

It was at this point that the real business of the day began, and with the rain stopping, the rainwear was removed prior to the ascent of Peckforton and Bulkeley Hills – this lead to a comparison of headwear between Lilian and Anne. Now Lilian has a very pretty Easter bonnet, but I hesitate to describe the headgear that day. Suffice it to say that when she dropped it I had to prevent myself from stamping on it to stop it escaping. I think it was Anne's day, though, as hers was a woolen hat with "Great Wall of china" woven into it in both English and Cantonese/Mandarin (?), which she bought on a recent visit to the only man-made object capable of being seen from space – the wall, not the wooly!

The wind had been somewhat vigorous during the day, so upon arrival at the plateau of Peckforton Hill the cloud formations created by the upsurging wind on the Welsh Hills on the right and the distant Derbyshire Hills on the left were really fantastic. A break was called not only for drinks, but also to replicate photos taken in yesteryear. I hope the comparison wasn't too painful.

A pleasant path bridges the two hills with the hillside falling away on the right, enabling two buzzards, using the upsurge of the wind, to give us an exhibition of the skill in riding the turbulence as they quartered the meadows in their never-ending search for food.

The late afternoon was cooling now, but the sun still shone fitfully as the circumvention of Bulkeley Hill was completed. A gentle stroll in the westering sun brought the party back to our cars.

A splendid day – another splendid ramble – and splendid leaders Marcia and Tony. Many thanks. G.

Seniors' Section report

OGDEN RESERVOIR

Leader: Harry – 5 April

Many years ago in Liverpool there was a cigarette manufacturer named Ogden, and now here we were at the start of the walk between two Ogdens upper and lower reservoirs.

The path stretches along an embankment retaining the two stretches of water, at the end of which is a short but sharpish climb to a gap in a wall leading onto a further path, but this gap is guarded by a waist-high metal post, past which had to be negotiated by our past-middle-aged bodies, leaving most of us gasping. I wonder whether there is any connection?

Once this obstacle was overcome, we were soon in amongst the rolling, hummocky Lancashire countryside, with the bright sunshine and a gentle breeze to keep the afternoon fresh, and the visibility clear for both far and near, giving us oases of bright waving daffs – and in the far distant hillside, swathes of gorse.

The further we progressed, the rumble of the traffic on the M62 intruded, but once on the footbridge spanning the motorway and looking down at the cars shooting from under the bridge, it was like shells being fired in a battleship's broadside.

Lunch was taken seated on the remnants of a stone wall, overlooking a valley through which a stream meandered, as we enjoyed the graceful descent of a heron onto the bank of the stream searching for its own lunch.

On foot once more we paused to admire colourfully sailed dinghies afloat on the Hollingworth Reservoir; as a backdrop to the bright greens of the local golf club. Various landmarks were identified, or disputably identified in one instance, which was argued over on the descent to reservoir and the tea room, for a much-looked-forward-to cuppa.

With our thirsts slaked, the walk was resumed around the Littleborough RUFC clubhouse and ground with its myriad of activities: rugby, soccer and even whippet racing! Leaving the enthusiasts to enthuse over their chosen pastime, the support pillars of the M62 loomed once more, but this time the carriageway was overhead.

It was back to the landscape as at the start with its confused paths and sheep tracks mingling, but our Harry led his flock unerringly. On the way numerous early honey bees were going about their buzz-iness, while overhead the first house martins were sighted having completed their long flight from South Africa, in contrast to a report on TV that the Cuckoo was becoming a rare visitor to our countryside. I wonder whether that is a bad thing, considering the number of other young birds they must have turfed out of nests that they have commanded for their own young.

With the sun waning and a chill creeping into the late afternoon, it was time to leave the moors and return to our cars for a change of footwear, and a change of diet, provided of course by mein host and the cheerful staff of the Black Horse in Denshaw.

Harry once more waved his wand and magicked up another great walk, weather, and a day of laughter too.

Many thanks from us all, Ann, Freda, Ia, Lillian, Sue, Bill and us.

Drama at Anglesey

Uplifting walk for our 'C' party on Anglesey

DESPITE a horrendous forecast on March 8, the weather turned out to be dry, but cold, and at times quite blustery. Our coach was full.

There were 16 ladies on my 'C' walk but only three men, the others being George Riley and Ken Regan.

Having arrived at Moelfre, on the eastern side at 11.15 with cracking views of the snow-clad Snowdonia range across the sea, we soon passed the Lifeboat Museum, then a memorial stone to a famous shipwreck with great loss of lives. We then headed along sea cliffs to Ligwy beach. Unfortunately the toilets here were closed so we moved inland to the Roman Village ruins at Din Lligwy and the Druid burial chambers for a second break.

Then we carried on inland at some height towards Byccan beach, which we walked down to for a further rest, sitting at the quayside.

Now, having some time to kill, I decided to carry on towards Benlecch but the cliff paths here were very muddy and tricky, as there had been a lot of rain recently. This was the last stretch, but disaster struck! Paula Simons, on her first walk with us, slipped, and badly twisted her right ankle. I had to arrange for an ambulance to come out, but it could only park at the top of the cliff, so, after having given her first-aid, the paramedics called for a large yellow helicopter from RAF Valley nearby. Would Prince William be piloting it, we wondered.

She fell at about 4.40 pm but both the ambulance and helicopter were not long on arriving.

Paula was eventually given gas/air, then leg, strapped up and put on a stretcher by a man who had been winched out of the helicopter. In the meantime the helicopter was able to land in a nearby field and she was easily carried on board, along with her sister Julie and Julie's daughter for the short hop to Bangor Hospital. (It turned out that Paula had to have an operation, and she was kept in hospital for about two weeks).

In the meantime, Dot's party were in the Kinnell Arms at Moelfre, enjoying a nice 2-course Sunday dinner! We only joined up with them a bit later and just had time for a drink and quick food.

It took us just 2 hours for the coach to get back home again – an eventful day. I do hope Paula has not been put off from coming out again, and I wondered whether a walking pole would have helped to prevent this unfortunate accident. *Richie*

LOST PROPERTY. On the above day out, the boot of the coach was left unfastened and a good pair of boots and some other rambler's property fell out of the coach on the return journey. We, nor the coach company nor the driver can accept any responsibility.

Insurance is only third party, and it would be far too costly to go comprehensive. It is up to all individuals to have their own private insurance.