

IT WAS ONE OF THOSE DAYS...

Simon Loveitt has been a CRCW since 1989. Here are four stories of when things don't quite go to plan!

1. 'Friendly Club' Pensioners Trip To the Lake District

This group met weekly for entertainment and fellowship in the church in Hulme in Manchester. As the CRCW I was invited to go along. The trip, to Keswick for lunch and Windermere for afternoon tea was an offer too good to miss. We arrived at lunchtime in Keswick at the coach park and dispersed to find a place to eat. After a good lunch and a wander around the market town, everyone returned to the coach park – except one person.

After an hour, no sign of Raymond, (an elderly gentleman on crutches) everyone else in the coach was becoming restless. After two hours, no sign of Raymond, people were becoming concerned. It was decided to phone the police. To everyone's surprise, the police came straight around in a police car (photo in Reform magazine at the time). I jumped in and we searched for the 'lost sheep' of the Friendly Club around the town of Keswick. No luck.

Now three hours late, it was decided to make our way home. The police had my home telephone number and I spent a sleepless night expecting the phone call to say they had found Raymond.

The phone call eventually came at 6am. The police had found Raymond several miles from Keswick walking down the A66 (on crutches) thumbing a lift home. He had apparently been in a pub, had too much to drink and had spent the night under a bridge sleeping it off. He eventually made his own way back by coach later that same day.

2. Youth Club outing to the Doncaster Dome

As part of the youth club in Manchester, trips to the ice rink were one of the highlights. The ice rink in Altrincham was so expensive (with only a 50p discount for groups) that it was cheaper taking the group to the Dome in Doncaster (with petrol and a group entrance fee of £1 per person).

It was an October evening and we set off early evening from Manchester only to break down in the minibus in the middle of nowhere (snapped accelerator cable). In the days before mobile phones, my colleague left to find a phone box whilst I stayed with the young people. About an hour later he returned - the R.A.C. were on their way. (We discovered later that if he had gone the other way from the bus, there was a telephone box about 200 yards away!)

They fixed the bus and followed us to see if it would drive. About 100 yards down the road the cable snapped again. The bus couldn't be repaired and needed to be towed to a depot on the A1, then to go back to Manchester for repair. After another couple of hours

of waiting, we were taken to the depot on the A1 in two shifts. By the time we arrived at the depot, we were due back in Manchester and had to phone all the parents to let them know of the delays, which would be extensive as the R.A.C. fleet cover didn't cater for minibus passengers! We were going to have to make our own way back to Manchester. It was now 11pm and the only course of action open to us was taxis home. We phoned taxi firm after taxi firm trying to get two taxis that were prepared to travel from Doncaster to Manchester with a group of young people. Eventually we found a firm, but they wouldn't be available till after the pubs and clubs had closed – at 2.30am. This we had to take, eventually arriving back in Manchester approaching 4am – having nearly bankrupted the Youth Club in the process with the cost of the taxis. Many of the young people said that it was the best youth club night they had ever had!

As compensation for the young people missing out on the planned activity, we planned another trip to Doncaster about a couple of months later. (With a different minibus.) We were all on the ice, when an announcement came over the Tannoy system asking me to go to the security office.

Two of our youth club were in the security office and had been caught letting the tyres down on a minibus. We were shown the CCTV, which had very clear images of the two young people in the security office letting down the tires of a minibus. Then it dawned on me. It was our minibus!

Asking why?

Apparently, they had had such a good time the last time we broke down; they wanted to repeat the experience!

Luckily the security office had a foot pump, and the two young people were given the foot pump to pump the tyres back up.



3. Holiday on a submarine...

Many funny events seem to happen on residential holidays. One such occasion was a young adult narrow boat residential weekend to the Leeds/Liverpool canal. It was a lovely summers day, and as we set out, after picking up the boat from its moorings, the young people all went to the front of the boat to sun themselves. After the sunset, we moored up near a pub, and spent a very pleasant evening playing darts and pool with the locals. When we returned to the boat we stayed up till gone 4am playing 'Jenga', as well as various card and board games.

The next morning (mid-morning) we were woken up by boats passing by. I got out of bed, to discover I was paddling. To our alarm, the boat was full of water and sinking! We quickly got everyone up and abandoned ship, then phoned the marina for help. Half an hour later, help arrived in the form of a big pump. We discovered the problem was a hole in the bow, which usually was above the water line, but with the young people sitting on the front of the boat the hole had been pushed below, letting in water. When we moored up and the young people moved, the boat was sufficiently full of water to keep the hole under the water.

4. Fiery Talks

Having been asked by a Church fellowship group to talk about CRCW ministry one afternoon, I arrived about ½ hour early. The leader of the group was already there, in the upstairs room. We sat down, chatted and waited for the rest of the group to turn up. After about 20 minutes waiting, I commented about the smell of smoke, but this we ignored. It became stronger, so got up and opened the door. The corridor was thick with smoke. Guiding the other person down the stairs, we met the Fire Brigade on the way upstairs.

The Church was having the roof repaired, and the contractors had set the church roof on fire. The damage to the roof was quite extensive, and took several weeks to be repaired.