

Trevor

W. R. MITCHELL, MBE
18, YEALAND AVENUE
GIGGLESWICK
SETTLE, NORTH YORKS.
BD24 0AY
Tel. (01729) 822371

ROY'S MOUNTAIN

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David, Cyril, Trevor, Bill – not forgetting Popsie – travel through the tropical zone of Clapham to the chilling high plateau of Ingleborough, visited 495 times by our late friend, Roy Gudgeon, the last occasion being on September 3.

Weather: Sunny and warm, becoming breezy and misty.



Trevor, duty chauffeur, draws up at the head of Clapham village. We step on to a carpet of dry leaves that have a crunchy, cornflaky sound. The foliage of a nearby tree, backlit by the sun, glows with a range of autumn tints. Cyril fulfils his duties as catering officer, producing coffee and fruit cake, courtesy of Margaret. The church clock is striking 11 as we hear the clunk-click of the mechanical ticket vendor at the entry to the Estate Trail. Bill recalls lodging with the Shaws at the cottage by the wood when he joined *The Dalesman* in 1948.

We hear the clunk-click of Cyril's camera as he ^{records} recalls the tinted splendour of trees by Ingleborough Lake. We pause by the inscribed seat marked C Graham, at a spot overlooking the gorge where Reginald Farrer planted rhododendrons and bamboos, hearing the thud-thud of a ram-pump, sending pipe water up the hillside. The most splendid tree was a Japanese maple, with armsful of red leaves. Charles Graham rejuvenated the area botanically, seeking out seeds of the Farrer plants, raising them at his home in Giggleswick, then re-planting them, in some cases reaching ledges above the beck dangling at the end of a rope. A Dales Tarzan.

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As we walked along the woodland drive, ^{seeing} ~~admiring~~ formations made of weathered limestone and a mysterious grotto, we admire a conifer plantation across the beck which had been transformed by autumn and strong sunshine from a dull green to a faint sandy brown. Popsie began his usual games with a stick, teasing us by grabbing them as we reached out to pick them up. Eventually, he/she settled down with a mini telegraph pole. We left the wood for the grey-green valley leading to Ingleborough Cave, where Bill recalled venturing with the guide Arnold Brown, who issued candlesticks with three prongs for illumination, while he carried a storm lantern. At the end of the cave, Arnold played a tune of sorts, tapping the big key of the cave against a row of stalactites.

At the approach to the limestone gorge known as Trow Gill we admired a cluster of tall beeches wearing an autumn regalia of copper. Trevor said his wife, Doris, who is keen on art, would call it burnt sienna. Popsie, ^{carrying} a large stick, leapt through the gap at the head of a stile and came to an abrupt halt when the stick proved too wide for the gap. The Gill was as grey and gloomy as a cathedral. We moved gingerly up the ruck of limestone boulders at the top end. Limestone when damp is slippery. We walked up a dry valley. Into view came Ingleborough. When first seen it had been bonneted by mist. Now it was clear, warm of tone. (What appeared at first glance to be a twin line of carbuncles on Little Ingleborough was later revealed as pieces of sandstone in canvas bags, left here by helicopter to be worked into the path. The bureaucratic mind had called it "footpath enhancement works").

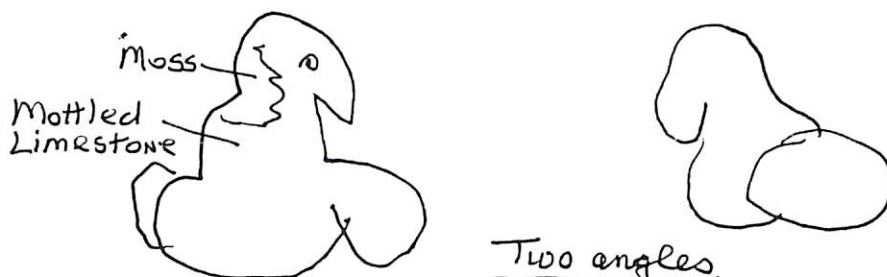
Strummed by a breeze, we passed from the tropical to a temperate zone, surmounting one of two stiles set side by side, as though crowds of walkers were expected. We had encountered six. And so we came to Gaping Gill, at the bottom of a funnel-shaped depression now edged by a barrier formed of posts and netting. A notice informed us that cave formation had taken place between 2 million and 10 thousand years ago, when mildly acidic surface streams entered joints and faults and dissolved the rock, leaving (in this case) a hole with a depth of 340 ft (110m). We settled by Fell Beck to have drinks. Popsie, proffered a piece of chocolate by Trevor, rejected it.

The landscape through which we now climbed, ascending to Little Ingleborough, was sheepless. Sex had reared its ugly head in the sheep flocks, which were now in low fields, awaiting the bidding of the local tups. Cyril observed, as he strode up the easier gradient of a good path, that when in 2005 the Right to Roam Act became effective we could also rightfully use the tussocky, wettish, mossy land on either side of the path. The first of three Ingleborough ravens entertained ^{us}, flying lethargically, flipping over on to its back as though through the joy of life and giving

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honking sounds rather than the customary gruff sounds associated with the species. Perhaps they were pretending to be motor cars.

We strode along the spine of the mountain, from Little to Great Ingleborough, in chilly weather, with the mist thickening. The summit of the hill was reached at 1-50. We took to the lee side of the windbreak, found protruding ledges suited to the sizes of our rumps, and settled down for drinks and grub. A survey of sandwiches revealed: Trevor – Sardines and lettuce. David – Marmite and cheese (in separate sandwiches). Cyril – cheese roll. Bill – Leicester and Edam cheeses in Wenhaven-fresh brown teacake. Popsie hoovers up scraps, then dozes off – while standing – to be roused at 2-15 as we move off, heading back to Little Ingleborough. We hear the sound of an engine. Out of the mist comes a "quad," with a young man on it and a dog riding pillion – presumably a farmer looking for a lost sheep. We found the path leading to Newby Cote – a long, at times indistinct, at other times peaty path through a succession of misty silences and over a sheepless moor. We diverted to stroke Harry Horse Stone:



On and on we plodded, as the light faded, until we reached Newby Cote, where two taxis, one of them from Skipton, were parked. A Bibby's bus approached; from it stepped young people who made for the taxis to be taken to their farmstead homes. We now had to walk on the road back to Clapham, where we were sworn at by pheasants. We must have disturbed them as they were going to roost.



*"We love to go a-wandering
along the mountain track..."*