

Trevor

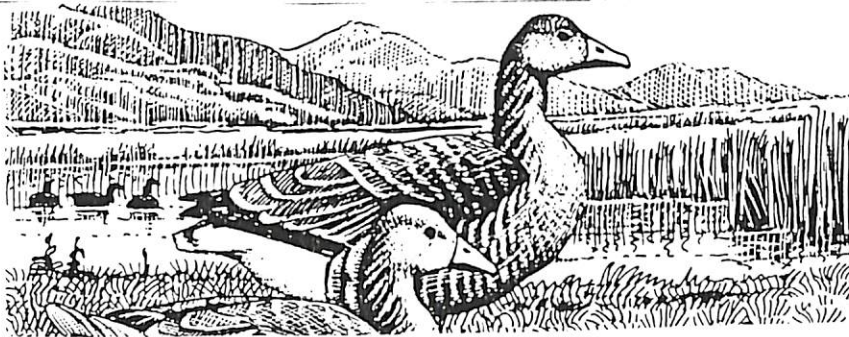
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IT'S A LONG WAY TO PLAICE FELL If you go by Hayeswater.

12 February, 2003. According to David, this was the Feast of St Gregory the Great, who sent for Augustine to sort out the English. (David added that he was referring to a date in the old calendar).

A two-car job. Car One: Trevor, Cyril, Roy. Car Two: David, Tony, Bill – and two dogs, travelling steerage. They were the irrepressible collie Popsie and Jasmine, a sleek black Labrador. They met various doggy chums en route.

Weather: Fine, sunny periods, sneaky northerly wind.



Astonishing, the two cars arrived at the parking place in Hartsop within a minute or two of each other. It seems that Trevor's route took in Ambleside and the Struggle. David elected to use the by-road from Ings to Troutbeck. We saw a hundred wild greylag geese, their plumage and orange beaks burnished by sunlight.

As we drove along the winding road up the Troutbeck Valley, David stopped so we might get out of the car and look down, down, down to the head of the valley, with the farmstead of Troutbeck Park, once owned by Beatrix Potter (who left it to the National Trust).

We drive from sunshine to where there is a horizon-to-horizon canopy of cloud. Brotherswater is gunmetal grey. Normally bonnie little Hartsop was lack-lustre. The car park was puddly.

We booted up, enjoyed coffee and cake provided by Cyril, our catering officer, and set off up the old road made when Hayeswater dam was under construction. Our dogs were swiftly overtaken by Thomas, a German short-haired pointer (GSP for short). Thomas had been electrically tagged ~~and~~^{and} answered to bzzzz! bzzzz! We met and chatted with two couples (one from Kidderminster, the other from South Wales) who had rented a cottage in Hartsop.

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We slogged up the path to Hayeswater, watched the dogs engaging in water-sport, then plodded up the hillside towards Rest Dodd under the unblinking stare of red deer – a dozen hinds and well-grown calves in tattered winter pelage. These were from the historic Martindale herd. They made a slow regal retreat, led by an oldish hind, passed through a gap in a wall and descended into one of the two gills at the head of Martindale.

We now plodded through their grazing area, noticing big green patches that Bill referred to as “lawns”, slot [foot] marks and also copious droppings. Nuff said. We walked what Roy called a non-path route, which in any other setting would have sounded very much like trespassing. We also walked into a swirling mass of fine hail which was also taking the sharp edges from other hills. The north wind continued to put ice in our bloodstream.

What Bill took to be the summit – wasn't. It is the story of his fell-walking life. Over the rim of the fell we espied the true summit, at 2,218 ft., also a backdrop of tawny fells, notably ^{Nard}~~Dodd~~, in a strategic part of the Martindale deer forest. A meadow pipit chirruped as it flew by. A pair of ravens frolicked in the sky.

We plodded over, ~~over~~ Nardus tussocks, peat as adhesive as copydex and areas where moss-crop (the early stage of cotton grass) would give local sheep a fresh bite. All eyes were now on Cyril, who selects our lunch-spot. He did not fail us, finding a rock outcrop near Angle Tarn.

Bill conducted a sandwich survey, which revealed:

Cyril favoured Edam Cheese and tomato. Bill – breaded ham. David – egg and tomato. His special fancy was for corned beef with custard and cheese with pickle, but in making up a meal he had to think of the dogs. Tony favoured egg and tomato with salt and pepper. Trevor's choice made us gasp – Tuna in olive oil, mixed with mayonnaise, with cucumber, covered with rock salt and pepper.

Small tomato, tossed by Bill, was rejected by both dogs. Jasmine did show a little interest but twice spat it out.

While David, Trevor and Tony tamed the Angle Knotts, the remainder of the party followed a deep-cut path that contoured around the fell with startling views of the alluvial flats of Patterdale – they looked as smooth and green as a billiards table - and of Brotherswater (complete with sheen).

There was now a somewhat weary plod, partly on path, partly on beck-bottom, to Boredale Hause, where met the track between Patterdale and Matteredale and that leading up Place Fell. When Roy told Bill about this fell, he spoke quickly, as though it

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was of little account. He did not dwell on the fact that the mass^{of rock} we saw was not the true summit.

Cyril, who had been first to climb Rest How, did a neat detour and was first to the summit of Place Fell – a praiseworthy double. We persuaded a young woman who was with her husband/partner/boy friend to photograph us as a group, which she did in the company of her dog, which was a (wait for it) African ridgeback, a big lolloping thing. By now Bill (who has had knee problems) had a decided list to starboard. The retreat began over ankle-wracking stones and down gutter^{eroded} by wind, frost, rain and the boots of countless visitors.

It was not an orderly retreat. But eventually two groups of three each came together in the car park and soon the vehicles were heading for the Brotherswater Hotel, newly restored. A workman was fitting slate slabs to the approach of the hotel, within two or three miles of Lakeland slate quarries. He told us the slate he was using came from – Malaysia.

