

## Twelve Men's Moor

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### Reminiscences of Victor Menhennet of Waterloo, Ontario, Canada

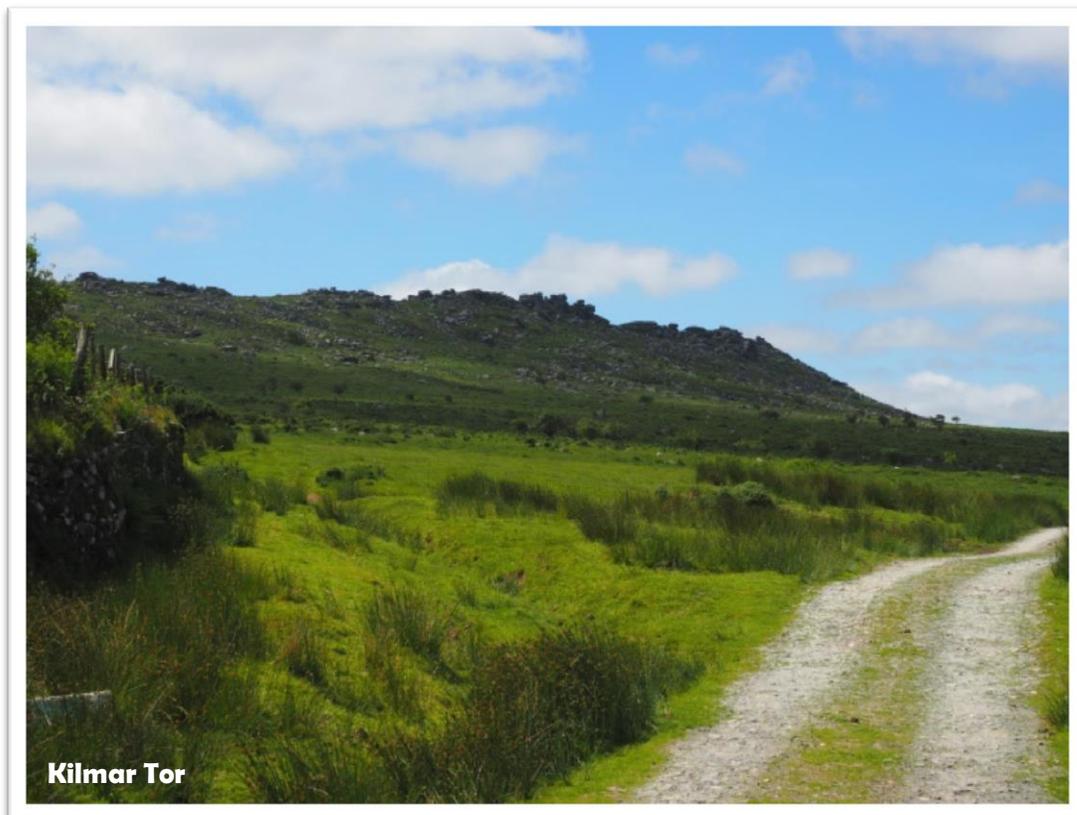
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My favourite place in the world is Bodmin Moor. I'm Cornish. Home town: Camborne - 1942 until 1966 when I emigrated to Canada. I travelled back and forth many times on vacation until 1973 when I returned for a period of six months to marry my former girlfriend also from Camborne town. We returned to Canada later that year and are still returning to the UK for vacations as we both have family living there. Here's my story.

My Dad bought my first bicycle in 1956 and that started my love of cycling. Along with a friend we made two tours of England covering some 1500 miles on each tour of two weeks. I regularly cycled over 5000 miles each year in those days.

On one occasion I decided to cycle to Exmoor and along the way I stopped for a drink of water at Higher Cannafame Farm where I met Will Hooper and his mum Ethel. That was the start of a long friendship. Funnily enough, my cycling partner decided to follow me several hours later and he also stopped at Higher Cannafame for water. We laughed about it when we met the next day. We came back on several occasions and camped at the farm. Over the years my family, several of my close friends, members of my youth club and Boys Brigade camped there.

Early on in our relationship I asked Will what was the tor that I could see to the south east. He told me that it was Kilmar and if I wanted, he would take me there. It's about a two hour hike from the farm which became a challenge for Will in his farm boots. He suffered somewhat. We youngsters took it in our stride of course.



**Kilmar Tor**

Kilmar - what can I say? The most beautiful spot in the world. I simply love it there. We camped on top several times and I suppose back then that was tolerated. The view from that grassy spot first thing in the morning when you open the tent door - amazing. No finer sight in my mind. Our route was always the same, through Halvana Plantation, across East Moor until we reached Rushyford Water. We always mistakenly called it Smith's Farm but it was always a welcome sight, and cooling our warm feet in Withey Brook was most refreshing. It was then along the disused railway via Rushyford Gate and across the other tributary of Withey Brook for the difficult climb to the summit. The view below of Trewortha with Brown Willy in the background - also amazing. Who can forget the night sky from that location? We were caring trespassers in those days leaving only footprints on the land. It disturbs me when I hear about how destructive people can be today with little respect for anything.



Of all my return visits to the homeland I have yet to miss a visit to Kilmar and the Moor.

Barry Boscowan became my closest friend during my cycling days AND he came with a motor cycle, a Triumph at first, followed by a BMW. I rode many, many miles as a passenger with him. I introduced him to 'the Moor' as he too was a keen camper. We used to camp on weekends close to Gurnards Head but Kilmar and the Moor became his favourite. Initially we would make the trek out to the Tor from the farm but later, after I had left for Canada, Barry found the 'back way' to Kilmar via Berrio Bridge and up the road to Trewortha. This of course was a quicker route and is one that I have adopted during my more recent visits.

I recall the time Barry and I abandoned our tent and spent the night on the stone floor at Higher Cannaframe due to an horrendous thunderstorm. Ethel used to bake those biscuits/scones that I loved so much. If I remember correctly they were baked, buried in the embers of the fire and I always wondered how she knew when they were ready. I liked them a lot. Would you know if they are referred to as powder biscuits that I see under Cornish recipes? Maybe they are specific to Bodmin Moor.

Barry continued the tradition of camping on the moor as often as he could and even introduced 'camping' to his wife who loved to recall the night at Rushyford Water and the friendly horses. Whenever I returned home our conversations always led to times on the moor. They were the best. Unfortunately Barry passed away a few years back but his ashes are on Kilmar Tor. That was his wish.

When on vacation my brother, who has similar interests usually takes me to the moor which includes an extensive tour of villages and sights of the area. Last time we ate at The Racehorse Inn, this being the third or fourth visit to this popular destination. As I said in the beginning, Bodmin Moor and all it represents is very dear to me.

It's interesting how the whole experience evolved from a stop on the road for a drink of water, to an enduring friendship, to good times with family and friends, to a love of the moor which still exists today and a choice of a final resting place for my best friend.

Photographs by Victor Menhennet

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*Note from the North Hill Local History Group:*

Ethel Minnie Sleep (born 1888 in North Hill - died in 1976 in Launceston) married in 1914 to William Hooper (born 1878 in Altarnun - died in 1956 at Higher Cannafame Farm in Altarnun). Ethel was the daughter of Isaac Sleep and Mary Hockin, both of North Hill. William and Ethel had two children, Will (born in 1927) and Sylvia (born in 1933). Sylvia died when just a year old and Will lived until 2006. Following his mother's death Will moved to Wrexham which is where he died. Little is known of his life after he left Cornwall despite Victor's best efforts to contact Will.

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**Victor**

Victor, pictured here, is a railway enthusiast, serving as a volunteer on the local Waterloo Central Railway for many years. He has been a contributor of several steam related articles through his connection with the Cornwall Railway Society and is also a supporting member of the Helston Railway Preservation Society.

If you would like to contact Victor about the Hooper family, about powder biscuits or anything else related to his story, his e-mail is [v.menhennet@rogers.com](mailto:v.menhennet@rogers.com).

