

# A Yorkshire

## trip back in time

Keen sailor Mike Trippitt explains why he swapped his boat for a VW campervan called George to take a trip back to his childhood haunt of Yorkshire...

WORDS & PHOTOS MIKE TRIPPITT

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**E**ach summer for almost two decades I have gone sailing. My travels have taken me across the North Sea, the English Channel, and around the Greek islands.

This year we sold our boat, my wife Clare and I swapped our deck shoes for deck chairs and bought a campervan.

But they say that old habits die hard. So, when the first day of our summer holiday dawned, even though we were heading off in a 'van, I still looked at the shipping forecast. *'Wind - South backing southeast 4 or 5, occasionally 6. Sea state - Slight or moderate. Weather - Rain or showers later. Visibility - Good.'*

'Good?' I thought. Was it really? For the first time in 20 years I did not care. This holiday would be about country lanes, limestone crags, verdant pastures

and rolling landscapes.

It would also tell us whether our decision to let our head rule our heart was a good one. We had been torn between a classic VW (the heart's choice) or a modern, more comfortable, but less spiritual, T6 (the head's preference).

We opted for the T6, but specified it to include a retro-two-tone exterior and bright orange interior. Our first holiday with 'George' (named after a character in Jerome K Jerome's *Three Men In A Boat*) would test whether we had achieved the best of everything; the technology of today, but the soul of the sixties.

### Seasick-free zone...

Clare was enthusiastic about the prospect of two weeks without any risk of seasickness, rough seas and big waves.

**1** Wharfedale looking towards Burnsall village and bridge

### OUR TRIP

Our route was from home in St Ives, Cambs, to Bolton Abbey via the A1, M62, M606 and A65. After touring Yorkshire we returned via the A614, M18 and A1. We covered a total of 611 miles.

I was relishing a return to my native Yorkshire; to revisit, in some cases, places I first came to 50 years ago.

I have fond memories of Bolton Abbey: the River Wharfe babbling past the ruined priory, the stepping-stones across the water. It was an obvious choice of base for our days touring the Dales.

Our arrival at Catgill Campsite was a simple, uneventful affair. We moored George, (it would take me several days to talk of 'parking' rather than 'mooring'!), in the shadow of the farm looking over Wharfedale. Within minutes, the pop-top was up, the chairs unfolded and the chilled wine flowing. There was no log to write, no ropes to stow and no decks to wash. I could really get used to this.

Wharfedale, at the heart of the Yorkshire Dales National Park, carries the





River Wharfe in a south-easterly direction towards the Vale of York. Throughout its length, lush, green pastures are flecked with sheep, while dry stone walls, stone farm buildings, villages and bridges define the landscape.

### Dale hopping

From Bolton Abbey, George travelled up the dale, taking us through the picture-postcards of Appletreewick, Burnsall, Kilnsey and Kettlewell. It was all of forty years since I was here last and as we ambled along I could not help but smile at my father's old joke. "Is your kettle well? – No, it burns all." Perhaps as bad a joke now as it was then.

At Grassington, the largest settlement in Wharfedale, we left George dozing in the car park while we enjoyed a couple of hours in the village. With plenty of shops, restaurants and tea rooms around the centre, it is a popular stop-off for walkers and day-trippers.

As a small child, on my first visit to Grassington, I sat mesmerised by folk dancers performing on a makeshift stage outside Grassington House. The view from the hotel across the square is just as it was all those years ago, and the village continues to host festivals throughout the year.

Journeying up hill and down dale, George coped well. The popular 102bhp VW engine was powerful enough for the

inclines we were encountering, although I was pleased he has a manual gearbox. When it comes to keeping the revs up and gear low, the undulating lanes and tight corners of the dales are not the best place to feel the benefits of an automatic.

Although I have images in my mind, sort of freeze-frames, of Wharfedale, I was not prepared for the sublime views at every turn. Comparing snapshots from the past with what was laid out in front of us showed how timeless this area is. It has barely changed in my lifetime.

### Chasing waterfalls

On the B6160, at the head of Wharfedale, evidence of the wet summer abounded. Water cascaded over falls at Cray, before scurrying through the rich meadows towards the main river.

Aysgarth Falls in Wensleydale is a popular spot and as famous as the cheese. Three sets of limestone steps in the River Ure comprise the Upper, Lower and Middle Falls. A riverside walk, shop and tearoom make it a worthy stop.

Aysgarth Falls, often described as 'a tumble rather than a fall' were a torrent. Vast amounts of water raged through the valley in testament to the weeks of rain beforehand. Clare struggled to define the noise: "Deafening, unbelievable!" The force in the water was quite something, so my desire to get close to the action for a photograph was

"It would take me several days to talk of 'parking' the camper rather than mooring it!"

tempered by a reluctance to get too close to the edge.

Further west, the Ribblesdale valley, linking Hawes with Settle, provided more spectacular views. The 400m-long Ribbleshead viaduct at Batty Moss stands impressively against the backdrop of Ingleborough

Hill, the second highest peak in the Dales.

It was along this valley, perhaps more than anywhere, that the temptation to stop at every layby or car park for a walk, to take pictures, or just to take it all in was hard to overcome. We could so easily have found ourselves wandering among the fells all day.

### Fifty pence well spent...

Our three days in the Dales made me realise that we could spend a week or more within the National Park alone, but before George took us further east there was one place I had to go.

"How much will it cost for us to come onto the site to take a photograph?"

I asked the owner of Gordale Scar Campsite on our arrival. I would have paid anything within reason. "Fifty pence," came the reply.

"Fifty pence?" I replied. "We have to pay you more than that. How about I give you a fiver and we stop for half an hour for a walk as well?"

**2 North beach Bridlington**

**3 Our campervan was converted by Needingworth Campers and is named 'George'**



### OUR CAMPERVAN

A 2016 VW T6 Highline Transporter 102bhp 2.0-litre diesel converted to our specification by Needingworth Campers. It provides comfortable touring and sleeping, acts as our second car and fits a standard parking space and driveway.

Needingworth Campers, High Street, Needingworth, St Ives, Cambs PE27 4SA  
01480 464100  
needingworthcampers.co.uk



"I don't charge anybody £5 for anything," he said. "Fifty pence is fine."

Not everyone will want to venture up the single-track road to this site, or on to the site itself, but the short journey from Malham village pays huge dividends. Gordale Scar, a 15-million-year-old limestone gorge and its waterfall are best seen from within, via a footpath through the campsite. The location is unique.

## Memory lane at Ellerburn

After a walk to the waterfall, our time sitting outside George with a cup of coffee, the Scar in the background, doing nothing more than savouring the view, was a memorable part of our trip.

Upon leaving the Dales, and after an impromptu stop at Stump Cross Caverns, George followed the traditional Pateley Bridge-Ripon-Thirsk-Sutton Bank route across to Pickering at the foot of the North York Moors.

My chosen campsite at Ellerburn, a sleepy hamlet nestling on the edge of Dalby Forest, is just a short walk from Thornton-le-Dale on the main Pickering to Scarborough road. Although it rained for most of the time, nothing could have dampened our pleasure.

In 1967, when I was just four-and-a-half, we had a family holiday staying at Ellerburn. Although old Mr Skipper's campsite has gone, the



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4 Waterfall near Cray, Wharfedale

5 Goathland, North Yorkshire Moors

6 Gordale Scar

present site (which is opposite) is a perfect retreat, where the sights and sounds of life outside this beautiful valley simply disappear.

A walk following the beck to the village pub brought back happy memories and rekindled my affection for this spot. I am clearly not alone; the owner spoke of one couple who have returned here for 40 years.

Ellerburn is an ideal place from which to explore Pickering. The town offers a variety of independent shops, tearooms and restaurants, as well as a market, a steam railway station and a 12th century stone castle. It was an outpost of William I soon after the Norman Conquest.

## Heartbeat country

The North Yorkshire Moors Railway terminates here. We hopped aboard for the 50-minute jaunt to Goathland, the setting for ITV's *Heartbeat*. Although the village cashes in on its fame (the railway station was also used in the Harry Potter films), it is unspoilt and worthy of a stop.

After Goathland, the line travels

north-east to terminate at Whitby.

We could have spent a whole day of enjoyment travelling in a wood-panelled carriage, accompanied by the whistle and unmistakable smell of a steam train.

Ellerburn is also on the fringe of Dalby Forest, on the southern slopes of the moors. The forest has 70km of cycle trails and walks within its 8,000 acres. There is a visitors' centre, restaurant, children's play area and Segway hire. It's also home to the treetop adventure, Go Ape.

I decided to give Go Ape a try - perhaps it appealed to my inherent primate instincts. After appropriate tuition, I swung, climbed and jumped like a baboon, albeit a rather stiff, slow and timid one. For dads, mums, children, and for those, like me, just mildly curious, it is an experience unlike any other. Those days scurrying around a pitching sailing boat had clearly stood me in good stead.

## Runswick Bay

The final leg of George's maiden voyage was a foray down Yorkshire's varied coastline. To get to Runswick Bay, our





## ENJOYING YORKSHIRE

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[outandaboutlive.co.uk](http://outandaboutlive.co.uk)

and click on Campsite Finder

**Campsite Finder**  
outandaboutlive.co.uk

next port of call, the 38-mile drive over the moors towards Whitby should have given us more of Yorkshire's finest: rolling moorland, miles of gorse and heather, verdant farmland, and expansive vistas.

Regrettably, the low cloud, or fog, deprived us of all of this. We could see no more than fifty metres ahead. Navigating along roads barely wide enough for two vehicles to pass took concentration and caution. At least any danger could only come along the road ahead. At sea, dangers are all around. Sailors hate fog.

Staithes, Whitby and Scarborough are all close to Runswick Bay. Although different, each has its charms. Staithes, once the busiest herring port on the east coast, peeps out at the North Sea from behind its breakwaters and the cliffs of the delightfully named Cowbar Nab. Its cobbled streets, lined with fisherman's cottages, drew us down to the harbour. The sanctuary within it contrasted with

the white surf outside. It was RNLi practice night. The inshore lifeboat rocked and crashed in the swell. No other vessels ventured out.

### Whitby wandering

Although Captain James Cook lived for a time as a child in Staithes he will forever be associated with Whitby, our next halt.

After parking at the harbour on the mouth of the River Esk, we meandered through the town soaking up its singular blend of nautical history, a strong Gothic influence and its association with Bram Stoker's *Dracula*.

Scarborough, Filey and Bridlington are all good at what they do. They remain unpretentious, have attractions in abundance and can give a whole week of things to do for the lover of the traditional British seaside.

Bridlington was my childhood seaside. Day trips, weekends and summer holidays gave me a love of the resort that lingers to this day. It felt like bringing

George home. The fishing trips, pleasure cruises, speedboat rides and funfairs are much as they were half a century ago, while the harbour and the lighthouse at Flamborough Head are unchanged.

Parked up on the esplanade, George became the latest member of my family to sit quietly in the rain, looking east over a grey sea and threatening sky.

### Yorkshire lingers

While journeying home I reflected on George's maiden voyage. Not only had it been one of discovery and adventure (and one far less strenuous and stressful than sailing!), it had been something of a personal odyssey to places that both enraptured me and shaped me as a child.

I had seen lots to take me back to the past, but it was to the future that my thoughts were drawn. Heading home, the call of Yorkshire rang out in my ears, and the fire of the desire to return burned brightly in my heart. Clare, George and I will be back...

**7** Bridlington Harbour

**8** Wensleydale

**9** George on The Esplanade, Bridlington

**10** Cheeky visitor at Ellerburn

### WHERE WE STAYED

#### Catgill Campsite

Bolton Abbey, North Yorkshire BD23 6HA

**1** Easter to 31 October ☎ 01756 710247  
catgillcampsite.co.uk

#### Low Farm Campsite

Ellerburn, Thornton-le-Dale, North Yorkshire YO18 7LL

**1** March to October ☎ 01751 470208

**Runswick Bay Caravan and Camping Park**  
Hinderwell Lane, Runswick Bay, Saltburn-by-the-Sea,  
North Yorkshire TS13 5HR

**1** All year ☎ 01947 840997

runswickbaycaravanandcampingpark.co.uk

**Filey Brigg Camping and Caravan Site**

North Cliff, Filey, North Yorkshire YO14 9ET

**1** 13 February to 2 January ☎ 01723 513852  
fileybriggcaravanpark.com

**Bridlington Caravan and Motorhome Club site**  
Flamborough Road, Sewerby, Bridlington, East Yorkshire  
YO15 1DU

**1** All year ☎ 01262 672707

caravandclub.co.uk