

*Time*

*A Walk on the Clent Hills,*

*February 27, 1996*

NOW all nature seeks to please,  
    And winter's grey-gloomed mantle slips,  
See, 'mid criss-cross barren trees,  
    Emboldened buds on twiglet tips,  
While last-ditch autumn's oak leaves cling,  
Brown-brittle, crisp, awaiting spring.

White-wool clouds fringe fleece-flecked sky.  
    They do not drift across the sun.  
Shadows do not once imply  
    That blazing spring has not begun,  
And Worcestershire's laid out to thrill  
All eyes that gaze from golden hill.

On a gentle, soft-peaked site,  
    Some bronze-based etchings wait with glee;  
Draw our gaze to left and right,  
    Naming landmarks we can't see.  
And strangers meet and pause to talk,  
Where dogs take owners for a walk.

Winter knows not yet defeat,  
    But *brilliant's* the day's right word.  
Backs absorb the grateful heat,  
    'mid all the joy that's just occurred,  
And all around, a startled earth  
Prepares abundantly for birth.

Winter suddenly was fair,  
    That bright blue afternoon we spent,  
Breathing deep and gulping air,  
    On the magic hills of Clent.