

Nature Notes

The snowdrops remained in flower until the end of February and the lawn still doesn't need mowing, the coldest winter for ten years yes we are back to a proper winter or are we? My mother always claimed I would find a wild daffodil out in the woods where we lived at Dingestow near Raglan, Gwent on my birthday, the middle of February, most years we didn't occasionally we did. I have seen one wild daffodil in bud on 10th. March in the Dymock Woods and in sheltered spots the first violets are in bloom. As yet I have seen no primroses to me it always seems a sad plant as it reminds me of the time when I was six or seven when mothers and children picked posies of primroses which were put to line the grave of a young farmers wife Annie Hanners who died whose death affected many neighbours . My mother along with many others was very upset as we as small children were who visited her to collect milk, you didn't just get milk she was always very generous and gave us sweets.

Odd childhood memories always remain in September we were always early to catch the school bus, we would scuff through the leaves looking for walnuts, the squirrels didn't seem to affect the walnut crop. In our garden the walnuts are picked and buried while still green by the squirrels giving no chance to eat them. Did you know the reasons why walnut trees were planted on village greens or near duck ponds so that when horse drank or sheltered from the sun they would not be annoyed by flies, the walnut tree gives off a toxic chemical which deters flies it can also affect the grass around the tree which farm animals avoid eating.

In the garden fewer birds come to the feeder and the finch flock on the set a side is down from 200 to 30 composed of goldfinches, chaffinches and linnet the bramblings having departed. I am pleased many of you enjoyed visiting the starling roost at Pencoyd.

J.R.P.