

Country Notes for January 2020

The month of January is seen as very gloomy by some people, with potentially the coldest weather of winter still to come. However for others, like myself, it is full of hope. The shortest day is now behind us, and although, for complicated reasons that I do not fully understand, the mornings continue to get darker until the middle of the month, the evenings are getting lighter each day, albeit by a very small amount.

At the time of writing these notes in mid-December there are already snowdrops, crocuses, daffodils and even bluebells poking above the ground in my garden. By the end of this month the snowdrops should be in full flower, and what a welcome sight they are. Even in this early part of winter they hint at things to come and gladden the day for all but the hardest of hearts! Even if snow covers them while they are in flower they will hide there until the thaw, to provide our gardens with joy and hope for the future.

There are many varieties of snowdrops, both single and double but the most frequently seen is *Galanthus nivalis*. As January marches on, their bell shaped flowers appear, hanging down in pure white, waiting for that moment when the sun shines on them and they open to reveal their full glory. It is said that the temperature inside these beautiful flowers is two degrees higher than the temperature outside, encouraging the very earliest pollinating insects to peep inside and obtain the nectar within.

There are some people, known as Galanthophiles, who collect and nurture the many different varieties of snowdrops with an almost religious zeal. For most of us however it is simply the pleasure of seeing a group of snowdrops, whether in our gardens or hiding under a hedgerow or ditch, on the rawest of winter days, that provides so much pleasure.

A Happy New Year to you all!

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