

January Nature Notes 2013.

January, named after the Roman God Janus who looks back towards the Old year and forward to the New. In Welsh: Ionawr, Gaelic: An Ceud Mhios na Bliadhna and in Anglo Saxon: Giuli!

Looking through my notes from last year I see that I suggested the re-establishment of Plough Sunday. In my quest to bring a degree of rural activity back to Croxley Green this could be a good idea. Are any of our churches up for it next year? In some counties the Plough Sunday (day before Plough Monday) was also accompanied by a Mumming play. Now as Croxley has some splendid Mummings.....

As we get to mid-January the days are supposed to noticeably lengthen but on this I have my doubts. We also need to recall the saying, "As the days lengthen, so the cold strengthens." January weather can be quite odd hence the other saying, "winter weather and women's thoughts often change!"

Looking around the field edges there is already sign of new growth with some bushes showing new buds. There are some very fine catkins to be seen in Croxley Hall woods where, unusually, I saw a cock pheasant rooting around the other day. Good to eat but for some reason I really don't like the smell of raw pheasant! The White Egret is still on the Chess and was in the company of a Heron the other day. A good place to Heron spot is the canal as there are a couple of really quite "tame" herons that will allow a close inspection. I have also seen a Kingfisher on the canal twice this month and another down on the Chess. Has anyone else noticed how the squirrel population seems to have slowed down? Have they been raiding the local chemists for tranquilisers?

There is an abundance of fungi around on the trees and I often wish that I knew a lot more about how to accurately identify the various types. They are fascinating to look at, large or small and some have some quite intricate patterns. Take the time to stop and look! January is not the best time for foraging although Dandelion roots, Wintercress and Wood Sorrell are in season although it is low season for the latter. One of the joys of this time of year is having the chance to observe and study the real bare bones of our deciduous trees. The intertangle of branches and the bark patterns can be quite fascinating and it is really worth the bother to find a tree that attracts you and really spend time studying it. There is quite a lot written about tree study and the like and when you start to read it become clear that trees really do hold a very important place in our world and not just for scientific reasons. So, here is a New Year's Resolution for you: get to know a Croxley tree.

So, did any of you do the Croxley Green Boundary Walk over the holiday period? It is well signposted and takes you through some lovely parts of our "village." We do still have some very pleasant rural surroundings but we must continue to fight to keep them for, as someone said to me the other day, Watford is getting nearer!

A quick last "plug" for our first (as far as we know) Croxley Wassail. This will be on Thursday 17th January starting at about 7:00pm gathering on the Green near the Artichoke then proceeding to Stone's Orchard. We have (weather permitting) Croxley Mummings, Phoenix Morris, Folk Music and our very own Croxley Wassail Song written by Chris

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Lawley. So please come along and join the Wassail (and bring something with which you can make a noise) and let us ask for a good harvest. "Old apple tree we Wassail thee and hoping thou wilt bear, hats full, caps full, three bushel bags full and a little heap under the stair" See you there!