

February: named from Februa the great Roman feast of purification; in Welsh, Chwefror, in Gaelic, Faoilleach (the month of raving wolves) and in Anglo Saxon, Solmonath (the month of cakes).

As I write this there is more snow up north and a forecast that it will reach East Anglia and places south this evening. If we miss the snow and get a sharp frost then it may dry up some of the mud that seems to be getting everywhere. I came back from a sheep dog trial with Beth the other day and she resembled the creature from the black lagoon.

February is always a very damp month not simply because of rain fall but also because of the low evaporation rate. It is also often the coldest month and as they say in the country, As the days lengthen so the cold strengthens! A good farmer should have, on Candlemas Day, half his turnips and half his hay!

The egret was down on the Chess today and there were a number of other quite vocal birds. Plenty of blue tits and great tits but none of my favourite long tail tits. A heron was doing a spot of fishing and seemed quite happy ignoring the human and canine traffic. The great naturalist Gilbert White made the point that in February the foxes begin to smell very rank. Well, the scent certainly seems to be stronger and very noticeable on my last dog walk. There is a strong fox population in Croxley and it is usual for me to come across them in Dickinson Square and the Avenue. It is also about this time that they start to mate and in previous years it has been quite usual to be woken by the yelps or screams of a vixen.

I heard and then saw a flight of geese the two evenings ago. They were honking away, calling to each other as they headed North and then suddenly East. In Western counties this calling was often thought to be that of the Wisht Hounds, the Devil's Hounds, hunting a lost soul. I am not sure that Croxley Green folk were that superstitious!

Walking by hedges and woodland the first buds are well under way and there are early signs of spring. My early Cornish daffodils are showing a lot of shoot and hopefully, a little later in the month the daffodils that have been planted in Dickinson Square will also start to show. Crops are starting to show in some of the fields. Although it is true that certain crops can benefit by being "damaged", it is not a general rule so please don't walk all over the farmer's crops (as I see people doing so often).

There is a very fine crop of catkins about at the moment and you don't need to look further than by the main gate into Stone's Orchard.

Has anyone walked the Croxley Boundary Walk as yet? Hopefully some of you have got out over the last week or so and pounded the paths. It's a good walk that takes in a number of different surfaces and environments so well worth the effort.

Walking down the hill to the Chess you cannot fail to notice the water on the left hand side at the bottom of the path. It is a mini lake with its own reserve. Today, heron, ducks, coots, moorhen and egret. The recent work done to the Chess seems to have increased the water level quite well. When will politicians realise that we are an island with a finite land mass (well actually we are shrinking). The more people, the more houses and the more land taken to build upon. The houses need resources and water is one of them. Think about it!

Last month saw Croxley Green's first Wassail ceremony (well, as far as we know) and I would like to thank all of you who turned out to make it a very memorable evening. It was so nice to see families with young children really taking part and putting their cider soaked toast into the old apple tree. Let us hope that it works and that we have a good crop of fruit this year.