

NUF March 2018 Reflection

Well here we are at the beginning of March still in our winter woollies. The first day of spring was obliterated by snowstorms and arctic winds. We watched the snowdrops and the crocus disappearing under a blanket of snow. When I looked in last year's diary at February we were already digging over the allotment and preparing raised beds. This year it is still a bleak looking wasteland. My golf course has been closed more often than it has been open. I should be sad. I am sad. I feel for the people trapped in their cars by snow and I feel for all the people unable to fly off to where they planned to go.

I feel for the poor homeless who have to survive in the low temperatures.

Yet isn't there something incredibly beautiful in these winter scenes? The landscape takes on an unblemished look. Whether the sky is bright diamond blue or filled with threatening clouds, the world we inhabit becomes a work of art. Black and white pictures everywhere.

By the end of this month these thoughts of mine will be a distant memory. We will be expecting March to go out like a lamb and the work of art before us will be warm and filled with colour. The lambs will be in the fields, the grass will be growing and what are now stiff silent skeletal trees, will be loose limbed and showing a blush of spring green. The air will be warmer and we will be anxious to step outside and breathe it.

My hero, the writer John Muir worked tirelessly to preserve the American wilderness from an encroaching civilisation that only saw trees as worth so many dollars at the sawmill. Muir saw the open country as Gods creation. He felt its beauty as well as seeing it. Only a benign creator could put such detail into the beautiful world he wrote. As a child, John Muir had been forced to learn the Bible off by heart. Often the words had been thrashed into him by his preacher father.

Those biblical words could not contend with the majestic presence of mountain tops, or granite cliffs that had been scoured smooth in the ice age and trees that had grown tall over centuries.

Where is God to be found. The Bible stories, particularly the New Testament do indeed point the way but for John Muir revelation came through experiencing nature as it was.

It reminded me of the best advice I had once, at a time when I was feeling frustrated with life, was 'to go outside and look. Look at the natural world'. Look closely and spend some minutes looking, absorb the feeling that you get. There comes a peacefulness, a calming of the spirit.

Whatever it is you gaze on, whether the vast horizon or the intimate detail of a flower, nature can reveal a spiritual presence that seems ageless and formless. It is the still small voice. Some will say that this is God and others it is only the Holy Spirit of God. Whatever we call this feeling from nature, let us keep it within our hearts and let it vaporise all our anger and frustrations, lift our own spirits and gently synchronise ourselves with the scene before us.

Whatever the weather, cold, beautiful, frustrating, warm, wet or exhilarating may you find that peace within it