

Wintry Walks & Views Of Stone

Stone based rambler and photographer, Paul L.G. Morris, shares some of his recent photos with us

In some ways winter is a strange season: we think of the wind, rain and snow but we do get sunny days; we consider that the days are getting shorter and the nights are drawing in but the days have been getting longer since 22nd December and the nights getting later from around 13th December – perhaps this extra light is why plants like snowdrops appear while we still think it is winter.

Winter has many moods and not every year is the same; here I show a collection of photos taken in and around Stone over the past few years.



Pirehill Lane last year: Although the cold weather may not be to our liking, nor to the liking of wildlife, it is important for the balance of nature (Tennyson's 'Nature Red in Tooth and Claw' is only part of the story) so I will start off with a couple of snowy, frosty photos with the first being a panoramic view from



For the second photo, this was taken after a light dusting of snow at Shugborough and shows the River Sow near Essex Bridge – strange how it has settled on the river but not the grass:



Winter is the most common time for flooding although, with our changing climate, this is not always the case. To cope with the overflow, nature provides flood plains or meadows which has blessed us with some lovely nature reserves beside the River Trent. Below are a couple of views of our flood meadows in action. The first taken from the A51 road bridge in 2019:



and the second is of Crown Meadows from Trent Close taken this year:



There is an almost magical feel to the atmosphere when fog begins to lift revealing a fine day; but fog, or mist, has a tendency to both quieten the sounds and soften the view. These two images were taken along the canal in Stone in early 2020 before we knew what was coming with Covid. The first shows someone having a quite stroll along the path:



And this second one was taken as the fog lifted leaving a light mist and showing a clear blue sky:



A fine day in the country gives me the opportunity to see trees devoid of their leaves but showing the magnificence of their architecture (or should that be sculpture?). What doesn't show well in photographs at this time is the reddish tint that many trees may have as the leaf buds swell; this gets more pronounced as the days pass. This particular tree was taken at Shugborough, just one of many fine specimens to be seen there:



I mentioned earlier that some plants begin to grow even though it is winter when everything is 'supposed' to be dormant. This is a clump (or is that a nod, carpet, cheer...) of snowdrops seen at the Dorothy Clive Garden:



But snowdrops are not the only plant emerging from the soil, daffodils are not far behind:



with a few early ones in flower:



Finally, it is always worth keeping an eye out for the unexpected. In an early January walk along the canal by the Whitebridge estate my wife spotted a Kingfisher. We couldn't get anywhere near to being close and I didn't have a powerful lens with me, just a compact camera. But I did manage to get this (heavily cropped and enlarged!) view of it resting on the tiller of a canal boat on the opposite bank:

Isn't this an amazing country?