10,000 ALL AROUND THE VILLAGE

The Spring Offensive - ready for the Big Push in ‘17

In Memoriam (Easter, 1915)

BY EDWARD THOMAS

The flowers left thick at nightfall in the wood
This Eastertide call into mind the men,
Now far from home, who, with their sweethearts, should
Have gathered them and will do never again.
In the last two editions of the Norley News the Norley Wildlife Group signalled its intention to plant 10,000 snowdrops in September, both along the wildflower memorial walk and elsewhere in the Village such as outside people houses. This mass planting has been greeted with enthusiasm and the Fund has already been given over £500. Only another £600 to go!

It was Richard Scott, Director of Landlife who has already given us much valuable help and advice about the walk and wildflowers in general (see the report “Wildflowers in Norley”) who first gave us the idea of a mass planting. He considered that the Memorial Garden particularly would benefit from it once the ground elder had been controlled but that making the planting all around the village would also prove to be successful.

The memorial walk has proved very popular with both villagers and visitors to Norley and efforts have been made with both autumn and spring sowings to extend the flowering season as long as possible. Spring flowers such as blue bells and daffodils are present along parts of the walk and some crocuses and snowdrops have been planted around many of the plaques. The Snowdrops especially seem to be universally loved and what better way to mark the end of winter than to see more of these little flowers braving the “sleety dribble and cranreuch (hoar frost) cauld”.

These beautiful delicately scented flowers are wonderful harbingers of spring, but they are also a very important early source of both pollen and nectar. Honey bees and Queen Bumblebees just awakening from their hibernation will visit them on warm days and if they do the flowers will produce viable seed.
As well as being beautiful they could well increase our chances in the Cheshire Community Pride Competition obviously not in 2016 but in subsequent years see [http://www.cheshireaction.org.uk/our-services/community-pride/](http://www.cheshireaction.org.uk/our-services/community-pride/)

Whilst poppies are now fixed in our thoughts as the flowers of remembrance, in the past snowdrops have been planted by returning soldiers from the Crusades and Crimea. Monks and Nuns too especially the Cistercians planted snowdrops around shrines and on their otherwise unmarked graves. So it’s no coincidence that many of the famous snowdrop walks are around the ruins of Abbeys and Monasteries and Nunneries. Interestingly too in some parts of the country picking the flowers is still considered unlucky as the unopened flowers look like a body wrapped in a woollen shroud (cerecloth) which up to the late Seventeenth Century in order to safeguard the woollen industry was mandatory.

It’s difficult to establish exactly when Snowdrops (Galanthus nivalis) first came into the British Isles. Some authorities attribute their introduction as part of the long list of answers to “What did the Romans ever do for us?” others make it some 1500 years later. But many of the traditions associated with snowdrops would indeed point to a much earlier date.

It was reputed to flower at Candlemas on 2nd February (40 days after Christmas) as written in an old English floral calendar dating from around 1500 ‘The snowdrop, in purest white arraie, First rears her hedde on Candlemas daie’.

Candlemas, which has much older pagan origins, celebrates three occasions according to Christian belief: the presentation of the child Jesus; Jesus' first entry into the temple; and it celebrates the Virgin
Mary's purification, the flowers being strewn on the candle lit altars of our Lady. The beeswax candles used for the rest of the year were blessed at Candlemas including the Paschal candle representing the body of Christ that was lit in Easter to mark his resurrection.

It has long been the accepted “wisdom” that snowdrops must be planted in the green but Galantophiles (snowdrop “fanatics”) have long known that actually freshly dug plum bulbs if planted straightaway in September will give a wonderful show in the following year which with regular replanting every few years will only get better and better. The celebrated plantsman Edward Augustus Bowles' famous advice was to stir them up' regularly which means splitting them up after they've flowered every three years or so.

The more we buy the cheaper they are. (Guide price is £120 per thousand) you can donate money to the SNOWDROP FUND Cheques to Sheila Hills at 15 School Bank Norley (01928 787122) Or if you want to buy some to plant yourself let Phil Gifford (01928 787217) know how many you will want - a planting guide is around 60 per sq m)