

26th February 2021

Februaries

"February fill dyke, be it black or be it white."

Country Proverb, from the mid-16th century

I'm not a specialist in the 16th century rural English economy, but I know how to interpret the proverb above. In February, the ditches around our farms and homesteads will be constantly filled, if not by the black, muddy water of winter rains, then with the white covering of snowfalls. Either way, "be it black or be it white", getting through February is a struggle. So, before February 2021 is done, I turn to the struggle to get through it.

In my college, there was a student from the Green Bay area of north Wisconsin, USA. I knew about *The Green Bay Packers* in the NFL (American Football, for the uninitiated.) But from him I learned of Green Bay benefitting from humid and frequently hot summers and of struggles with long, cold snowy winters. I knew about the latter, for in the NFL "playoffs" in January I'd seen *The Packers* play in snowstorms often enough! Perhaps it was that, *and* coping with dreich Edinburgh winters, that made this American student say *every* year: "There's a creeping depression that descends on us at the turn of the year and lasts through to March or even April. It's called 'The Februaries'. Isn't it hard to bear?" And that resonated with all who were struggling through the rigours of another February.

This year, Covid has made this all the harder. There's been a change in mood recently, which, though mitigated by the hopefulness of the roll-out of the vaccine, has indicated that life is a deeper struggle for many: the continuation of home-schooling; more Covid deaths; being advised not to book holidays; travellers into our country going into quarantine; well-documented mental health issues; the rigours of a winter and a lack of sunshine. It's no wonder that "The Februaries" are a struggle.

I have no clever things to say about that – other than a plea that if we know what our own "Februaries" are like, we recognise that other people are struggling with them too and may be finding it even harder than we are. After all, we've all to get through the same February together. There are only two days of this one left. So, let's hang-in there ...

A prayer for today

Thank you, God, for still being there, especially in the worst of times. Amen.

An original reflection by © Tom Gordon

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