

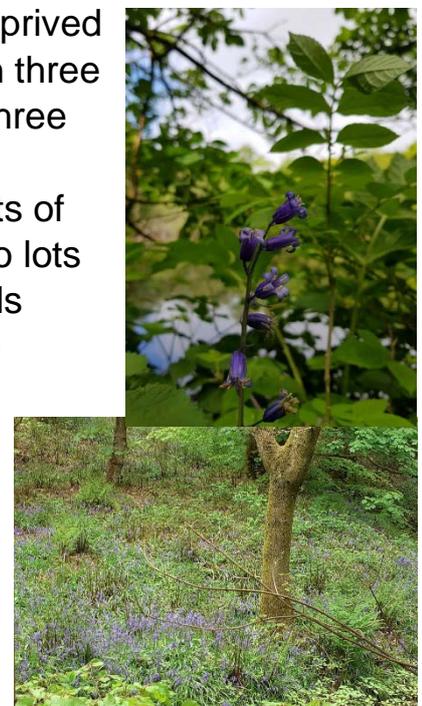


Nature's rainbows, whimsical wanderings:

I'm writing this during week eight of lockdown, as things are beginning to be relaxed very slowly, very tentatively so it feels a natural time to reflect on these last eight weeks.

I am currently based in Tonge Moor, part of one of the more deprived council wards in Bolton. Tonge Moor is an urban area less than three miles from the town centre. However it has within or around it three rivers or brooks, the rivers Tonge and Irwell plus Astley brook, Bradshaw brook, Eagley brook, which in turn means there is lots of walks near the water, covered by trees and undergrowth and so lots of nature if you are willing to look for it, often on the ruins of mills which nature has reclaimed as its own during the last one - two hundred years.

Over the last eight weeks I have made a conscious effort to use my daily exercise time to re explore this wonderful gift of green space, God's creation and because of the time of year I have found myself watching the bluebells appear, first as a blanket of green and then as individual little blue bells and now I find myself amazed by the terraces of these lovely flowers there are to be found here!



At the same time as I began enjoying this blanket of colour a resource for children to enjoy was shared on Facebook (<https://m.facebook.com/spinnakertrust1/>). This was an activity sheet based on the bluebell. It told me that the bluebell, historically,

has many names, wood bell, fairy flower, cuckoo's boots, lady's nightcap. I can see why they have these names, can you?



I also learnt that in Victorian times, flowers were given their own special meanings. The bluebell stood for humility, gratitude and everlasting love, so for me, this is a flower of our time.

After all, its first meaning humility remind us perhaps, that humanity's lack of humility may have been part of the reason for us to be in this situation we find ourselves in? Those that have been most important, most needed during this time have predominantly been those often missed, unseen and forgotten in our society, maybe we could say those working in the most humble occupations, the nurses, the home carers, the shop workers, delivery drivers, postal workers, transport workers and community volunteers.



Of course, that takes us to the second meaning, gratitude, which I don't know about you, but I certainly now find myself extremely grateful for all those mentioned in the list above, but also for so many other things. I find myself seeing God's world, God's creation anew, so grateful for the gift of this fine weather, for the technologies I used to moan about, for creative people trying new ways to keep us connected, for the time to reflect, review, and renew my spiritual life.



Again, that thought leads me to the third meaning for this unique flower, everlasting love! The love God has given and continues to give us no matter what mistakes we make, we just need to look at God's creation to see the abundance of his love. The love you and I share each week when we clap our gratitude every Thursday at 8.00pm, or when we light our candle and pray for all those affected by this pandemic each Sunday at 7.00pm as requested by Churches Together in England. Not forgetting the love shared by our children, and some adults, when they paint their love and hope through the many rainbows placed in so many windows to brighten our days!

