

This year has started differently from last.

On January 1st last year we had remnants of quite a decent fall of snow, but this year we have hardly had a winter at all. A few really severe frosts, but mostly really mild. However, as fallen trees testify, gales have bothered us from time to time. One afternoon in January a neighbour's 40ft conifer came down with its top across our new garden shed. Having been informed our neighbour came home, sawed off the branches, made a phone call for help and by seven o'clock a man with a chainsaw came and cut up the trunk. Magic. Only one fence panel damaged, no damage to the shed and our neighbour has put up a new fence that suits us both. All's well that ends well.

The dire warnings of global warming seem apparent this year when the winter has been so mild. We had our first snowdrop out on the 15th December and by mid January a good many had appeared. By early February they were joined by crocus and tiny irises.

The greenfinches that seemed to have vanished last year have come back to us

in good numbers, joining the chaffinches. I think at this moment the bluetits have started nesting in one of our boxes. I have not seen them, but when I go outside, there is quite often one shouting at me to go away. Sparrows are flying around with feathers in their beaks and the robins have paired up although the woodpeckers seem to have deserted us.

We have bought niger seed to encourage goldfinches, but so far they do not seem to have found it. My sister tells me that it took a fortnight for hers to turn up, so I must be patient. I'm afraid when I want something I want it yesterday. Squirrels across the road have been active all the winter. I know they are vermin, but we love watching them. If only we could move like that.

Lots of bumble bees around on fine days

and some days have been warm enough to



work outside without a coat. Not that I do much outside now. During February we had a few days in which sunrise and sunset were really amazing. It is impossible to describe the colours and of course the bare black outlines of trees against it made it even better.

We have just been taken on one of our trips to the hospital and noted that the 'road closed' sign has been removed (see last issue).

I feel we are very lucky to have the bulls in the field near us. The black ones we have now are really handsome.

A resident told me that planning permission has been sought for the tiny piece of land in Iffin Lane that was once owned by a water company. I have no idea who owns it now but many years went by when the rough grass in the middle was covered in primroses in the spring. Years later someone tidied it up and burned the young saplings that had grown up and I have not seen the primroses since.

A really good neighbour has taken on the task of removing fly tipped rubbish in Iffin Lane, putting the small stuff in his bin at home and is in touch with the council to get the bigger stuff removed. It is, of course, Glen Sharman. Thanks from all of us, Glen.

It is with very deep regret

that I hear that Marian Brown has lost her battle with cancer. She had fought long and hard against the disease, and will be greatly missed by the community for whom she did a great deal. Our sympathy goes to Trevor and Alec at this difficult time. On that sad note I will leave you.



My VIEW

By JOAN GOWER