

## Tony Thinking Aloud lxxiii

So, we have come to September! My 'Countryside Companion', given to my wife for her birthday in 1945 and which I often use for reference, says – 'September mornings are chilly and wisps of mist linger in the valley until sunrise'. Chilly certainly this morning, strange how things change with the months!

We are in autumn, when does it start? I thought September 21<sup>st</sup>, because it was my grandma's birthday! Astrological autumn begins about that date, because it is defined by the earth's axis and orbit around the sun.

But we now also have Meteorological Autumn which is much tidier. It just splits the seasons into four periods of three months each, and it begins on the first of the month – my birthday! However life and nature are not all as tidy at that!

My book tells me small animals begin to gather their winter stores: dormice, field-mice, hedgehogs and squirrels. Snails take cover, toads and frogs show signs of hibernation. They will not all begin on exactly the same day.

Their lives depend on their industry. But what about us just now. My friend tells me she is getting things together for her Christmas cake! Some folks will have written their Christmas cards (truly) bought when they were in the New Year sales! They will have presents packed too! Others will be rushing about on December 24th.

In nature the animals will do what is required for survival getting ready as nature guides them. Indeed, they may be mightily confused if the weather forecast for the coming week is to be believed and the height of summer returns....

Christmas we may think will be more back to normal this year. A lot of getting ready for Christmas reflects our relationship with other people. To many it has no religious meaning. I have told you about my mates, well here is another one.

Of Christmas he says he does not 'believe in all that stuff'. I asked him what he did on Christmas Day. 'Oh' he said 'I help my mate provide Christmas dinner and a fun Christmas Day for some folk around here who would be lonely and have nothing' – that takes some preparation, it is the essence of the season.

So like nature we are in a getting ready time. In nature it is born in the animals. The message of Christmas is about helping us to understand more about love, caring and peace. We have been put to the test in expressing them in our relationship with others in the pandemic. We express, love, care, concern in different ways ... perhaps now as we look to winter months, like the animals ... it is the time to think about it all. But let's hope for that bit of summer first!