

# Strawberry Line in November 2020

## *Michael Greaves takes a seasonal ride*

None of us would have ever thought that our precious Strawberry Line would have notices advising walkers and cyclists to avoid each other. But I loved the caption that someone has added 'Sharing is Caring'. These few words are so true and a lesson for us all in these difficult and uncertain times.



**Signs at the entrances to the Strawberry Line**

With the second 'lockdown' and after what has seemed like weeks of continuous rain, it was time for a bike ride to see how nature is preparing for its own lockdown along the Strawberry Line. The end of November is well and truly the end of autumn with summer just a distant memory. Winter has arrived.



**Cow Parsley**

Some plants seem to have forgotten they should have made seeds rather than still displaying their flowers. The frosts will quickly destroy the head of this lovely Cow Parsley, but for the time being it adds some colour on what was a dull and grey day.



**Beautiful Moss Crown for a fence post**

This must be the most impressive 'Crown' that has adorned a timber fence post in North Somerset. The moss has found a home and has been joined by another lodger. The verdant green stands out as a beacon amongst the nettles. You would never find one of these in a builders' merchants or at B&Q.



**Mr Badger lives here**

There are dozens of badger setts along the Strawberry Line and this new sett shows the amount of stones and soil that they have to excavate to make a home under the old railway embankments. Being nocturnal, it's very rare to see any badgers unless you happen to be walking or cycling just before sunset.



**Sloes make perfect gin**

There is an abundance of sloes this year, if you are quick there will be time to prepare sloe gin for Christmas. Birds don't enjoy the bitter taste so they will remain on the blackthorn trees until they fall off and the berries eventually take root and grow into new bushes.



**Oak tree**

Most of the trees have lost their leaves, the only remaining are the oak trees. A few weeks ago the leaves were all golden and glowed in the sun. Alas, no sun and very few leaves but we can all look forward to next year after the trees hibernate and rejuvenate themselves when the days lengthen and the spring sunshine warms the soil a new season will begin.



**Mendip Spring Golf Club**

Government restrictions have closed Mendip Spring Golf Club. On a fine day there would have been a constant stream of enthusiastic golfers attempting to miss the sand bunker and reach the flag. Even the flag has been furloughed, but the grass is still being manicured ready for the day when they can return and enjoy this special corner of North Somerset.



**Spot the difference – sheep grazing on the fields**

There are very few animals in the fields adjoining the Strawberry Line except this flock of sheep and some beef cattle. The moors have been drained over the years which has allowed the farmers to graze their sheep and cattle on the dryer fields although most spend the winter in barns when the fields are waterlogged.



**Little egret**

There always interesting birds to see in the fields and along the hedgerows. The most unusual were little egrets feeding along the edge of the rhyne. Once extremely rare they are more frequent visitors to the wet fields. A small flock of redwings were enjoying the hawthorn berries but quickly took flight. There was an aerial fight between two crows and a buzzard and a wren dived into a bush as I rode past. Many years ago Rod Stevens who is a very knowledgeable ornithologist identified 35 species of birds in an hour whilst walking towards Churchill. I think I managed 10 on Saturday.



**Where does this road go?**

The last photograph has a poignant end to my bike ride. This dark muddy road is leading somewhere, but where? There are some obstacles and the road has many turns, but there does seem to be some light on the horizon.

*Michael Greaves*  
*November 2020*