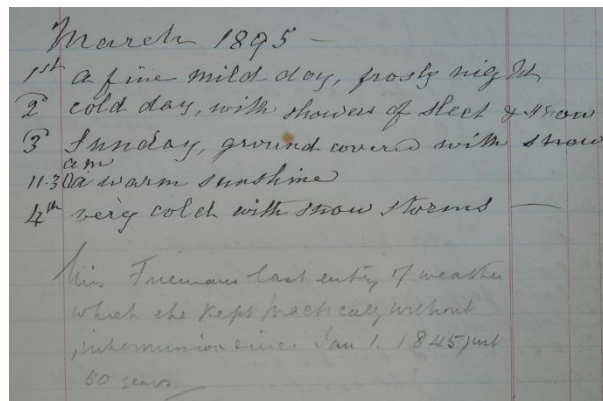


## Whatever the Weather in Ryton

### CR350/19/1-7

Miss Mary Freeman of Ryton-on-Dunsmore did something quite remarkable. She noted the weather in Ryton-on-Dunsmore on a regular basis for roughly 50 years, up until her death in 1895. The final entry in the seventh diary being a rather poignant note written in pencil in another hand which says:

*'Miss Freeman's last entry of weather which she has kept practically without intermission since January 1<sup>st</sup> 1845, just 50 years.'*



Warwickshire County Record Office, [CR350/19/1-7](#)

The form each diary takes varies across the years. At times it records the weather as a summary for the month or on specific dates; at other points it gives the date and a brief note about the weather. As well as a mix of factual recordings, such as the temperature according to the thermometer on her wall and the number of days of sunshine, Mary also sometimes recorded the weather in rather more descriptive form. For example, we learn that July 1864 was a very dry month with the detail that the

*'Cock pit is quite dry, which has not occurred before in the memory of the oldest people now living in the village.'* (12<sup>th</sup> July 1864)

This dry spell must have continued into August as

*'near Cubbington, I saw a sheep standing in a small stream, and drinking the water – a very unusual occurrence, and a sure sign of dry*

weather.’ (31<sup>st</sup> August 1864).

We also learn that October 1882 must have been extremely wet as she writes

*‘...This has been a rainy month – rain 20 days – and a large flood in the Avon.’* (31<sup>st</sup> October 1882).

Mary records other noteworthy events such as an earthquake on the 6<sup>th</sup> October 1863 with the entry

*‘this morning between 3 and 4 there was a slight shock of earthquake, accompanied by a rumbling noise, like the wind in the trees. I felt my bed shake, as if some person had struck against it.’*

to observing in the sky a

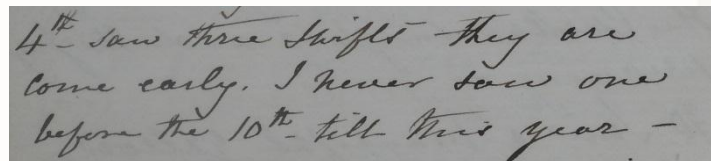
*‘very large meteor in the north low on the horizon’* (9<sup>th</sup> September 1871)

or that the sun was eclipsed on 31<sup>st</sup> December 1880, which must have been a spectacular way to end the year.

### **As well as the weather**

Alongside the diaries being a great source of information about the weather, they record a wealth of information about the plants and wildlife in the area. From them, you can learn about the types of birds she sees and when, including that on 4<sup>th</sup> May 1862, she

*‘saw three swifts – they are come early. I never saw one before the 10<sup>th</sup> till this year’.*



Warwickshire County Record Office, [CR350/19/1-7](#)

From her diaries, you can also discover the kinds of fish that are in her pond and, for some of the years, the number of each kind that have been caught. As well as information about the types of fish, Mary

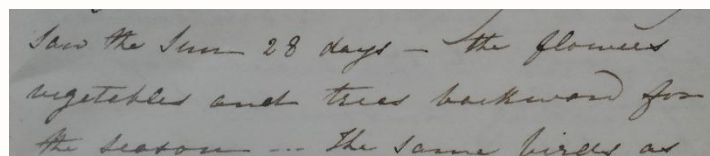
recorded a recipe for fish bait should you fancy catching some of your own (on the 4<sup>th</sup> January 1864).

Mary Freeman took a keen interest in the animal life around the village and often recorded her observations in the diary. One such example was her description of a stoat that she spotted one evening.

*'a stoat came out of the hedge, ran back again, seeing us; we stood still, when he looked out again, and ran across the walk under the laurels, peered about and soon ran back with a large frog or toad in his mouth. he disappeared in the hedge and we saw him no more -'* (10<sup>th</sup> October 1867)

Perhaps because she owned a considerable amount of land around Ryton, Miss Freeman paid close attention to the flowers and crops around the village and regularly recorded information about them. We learn all about the flowers that were in bloom or that she collected whilst out on her walks in the lists that she includes. We also learn specifics such as

*'The flowers vegetables and trees backwards for the season.'* (May 1845)



*Saw the Sun 28 days - the flowers  
vegetables and trees backward for  
the season - the same birds as*

Warwickshire County Record Office, [CR350/19/1-7](#)

or that

*'On 31<sup>st</sup> saw for the first time this season a few tubers of early potatoes slightly effected the disease that has been so destructive the last two years the stems are also withered with dark brown patches on them.'* (July 1847)

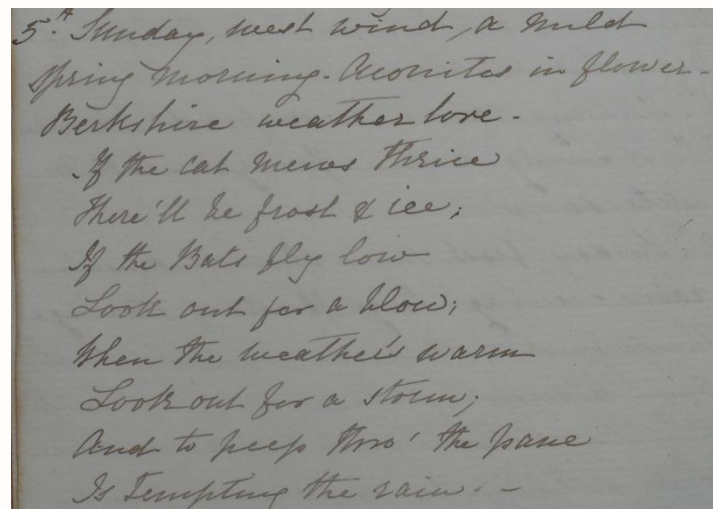
## Folklore and traditions

One of the things that I found the most interesting about the diaries was the inclusion of local traditions and rhymes from around the country regarding the weather. Mary was clearly fascinated when she heard about 'Good Friday Bread' and recorded the following conversation

*'24<sup>th</sup> Talking with Mrs Bayliss this afternoon, I asked how little Tom [...] was? her opposite neighbour's child, who I had heard was ill – She said he had been very poorly with the bowel complaint, and nothing his mother gave him did him any good, 'so' she continued 'I took him a piece of Good Friday bread' and grated some of it in a little Brandy, the child took it, and it cure him; he has been to school as usual again' 'Good Friday bread,' I said what is that? 'Bread made and baked on Good Friday' replied Mrs Bayliss 'it never goes mouldy, and is very useful grated in brandy, as a medicine, the piece I have now has been baked 7 or 8 years it is quite good, but very dry. I remember my Mother having some that had been made more than 20 years. I always keep it wrapped in paper in a box upstairs.'* (24<sup>th</sup> May 1863)

She also recorded rhymes about the weather, including the following Berkshire example on 5<sup>th</sup> January 1871

*'If the cat mews thrice,  
There'll be a splash of ice;  
If the Bats fly low  
Look out for a blow;  
When the weather's warm  
Look out for a storm;  
And to peep thro' the pane  
Is tempting the rain.'*



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## More about Mary

Mary Freeman was born in 1809 in either Wolston or Brandon (it varies between the Censuses). By 1851, she was living at Ryton House (which was called 'New House' on that census) with her Uncle Stephen who is recorded as being a 'Landed Proprietor'. Stephen built the house in 1806-1807. After the death of Stephen in 1856, Mary became head of the household and she continued to live at Ryton House until her own death in March 1895. After her death, she left the house to Charles Browett, her nephew and a solicitor in Coventry, who owned the house until shortly after the Second World War. It is as a result of the Browett connection that these diaries came to be deposited in the Record Office.