

Dec 79 / Jan 80

Weather figures show a winter to remember

The past year will be remembered by many for its unusually severe winter which seemed almost endless, for the late and wet spring, and for the long late autumn.

January was ushered in by sub-zero temperatures and heavy falls of snow, conditions which were to prevail until well into March.

The winter was the most severe since 1963, with a mean daily temperature of only 1.3C (34F).

At its worst we had a gross minimum of -14C (6F) and an air minimum of -11C (12F) on January 13.

With 67 ground and 66 air frosts recorded at the Halesowen Climatological Centre, coupled with 52 days on which snow was lying, conditions underfoot were treacherous with some side roads barely passable for days on end.

The onset of spring in March saw much of the lying snow thawing, but the month still produced 17 ground frosts and it was not until the middle of May that the frost-risk finally passed.

By May 14, daytime temperatures had risen appreciably and we had the second warmest May day in 24 years when the temperature reached 25C (77F)

on both the fourteenth and fifteenth.

Spring was the wettest for at least 33 years with 310mm (12.20in) of rain, some 136mm (5.35in) above normal.

The incidence of both ground and air frosts during the season was above expectation as the effects of the very severe winter continued to be felt.

The three summer months beginning in June were far less wet than is customary with only 146mm (5.75in) of rain out of the usual 205mm (8.07in) falling.

Temperatures were, if anything, slightly up on average, yet the incidence of thunder was well below expectation.

However, despite the above-normal temperatures, bright sunshine was less than usual and days were generally more cloudy than would obtain in a normal year.

The three-month autumn season ending on November 30 was in line with those of recent years, the above-average temperatures extending well towards the latter end.

September was a very pleasant month with only half of its normal rainfall and with warm, sunny days.

Even November proved warmer than usual, as well as being a reasonably dry and fog-free month.

Some of the more outstanding features of the year may be summarised as follows.

Air pressure was generally below average with more than the normal eastward track of depressions over the Midlands. Winds, however, were not unusually strong, there being only two gales recorded, one in August and the other in December.

Temperatures were down on the average, this mainly due to the severe winter.

The highest air temperature of 28C (82F) occurred on July 27 while the lowest of -11C (12F) was recorded on January 13.

The lowest gross temperature of -14C (6F) was recorded on the same night.

Rainfall totalled 883mm (34.76in), and was 118mm (4.64in) above normal, falling for a total of 681 hours, itself 54 hours more than in an average year.

This is surprisingly still less than 8 per cent of the total available time in the year.

The heaviest fall came on December 27 with 44mm (1.73in). In addition to the above, three other falls in excess of one inch in 24 hours were recorded.

Snow was lying on 46 days, almost double expectation, with snow or sleet on 49 occasions. Hail occurred on 11 days with fog on 12.

HAYLEY GREEN

52°26'N 02°04'W 155m AMSL

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