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The freezing truth about February

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TODAY weatherman



THE BIG FREEZE
TEMPERATURES IN ENGLAND
SINCE 1745
The coldest winters

Mean 24-hour temperature

1740, 1963	31.5F	-0.3C
1795, 1814	32.8F	0.5C
1879	33.2F	0.7C
1830, 1895, 1947	34.0F	1.1C
1891, 1917, 1940, 1979	34.7F	1.5C

• The coldest months

Mean 24-hour temperature

February 1947	27.3	-2.4	August 1912	55.3	13.0
March 1785	34.2	1.3	September 1807	50.9	10.5
April 1837	40.4	4.7	October 1740	41.5	5.3
May 1740	47.5	8.6	November 1782	36.2	2.4
June 1909	53.3	11.8	December 1890	30.5	-0.8
July 1816	56.1	13.3	January 1795	26.5	-3.1

SHIVERING in bed, a box of Kleenex on one side and a glass of hot lemon on the other, I can feel particularly sympathetic towards those who simply can't afford to keep themselves warm during this dreadful winter.

Yes, it really has been the coldest February apart from 1947 since Victorian times. I'd forgive you for being unsure because we've been assailed with all sorts of conflicting statistics for the last week.

Now February really is history, though some authoritative figures will put the month into context. These records are from a weather station representative in the Midlands.

MONTH	AV. TEMP.
Feb 1947	-2.4
Feb 1986	-2.0
Feb 1956	-1.3
Feb 1963	-1.1
Feb 1929	-0.6

Another remarkable fact is that in the Cotswolds and over the Derbyshire hills, some of us have had snow cover since the afternoon of January 27. Even as far south as Dunstable Downs there has been snow on the ground for 30 successive days.

More than one person has reminded me that after February 1947 we enjoyed one of the most fantastic summers of the century, including the hottest August for nearly 300 years. I'm not going to say that it WON'T be a good summer.

But if that memory looks appealing, let me redress the balance with some others. From my list of bad Februaries, 1963 was followed by a cool and changeable summer and July 1956 was the wettest for over 100 years in the London area.

So let's stay calm and just look forward to a gradual improvement over the next few days.

*Today's weather in colour
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