

THE SPRING OF 2003.

The spring of 2003 with its weather index of 584.7 came second in line of excellence to that of 1990 with an index of 611.1 giving us our second most open spring season since records began here in 1956. This is not surprising in view of the records broken by March in terms of sunshine and April in terms of temperature. The highest maximum recorded was 27C/80.6F on the 31st May equalling the same temperature first set in 1990, and coming second to the highest ever recorded of 27.5C/81.5F in 1978. This has resulted in a mean maximum temperature of 14.8C/58.6F, some 2.5C above expectation and second best behind the 15.4C/59.7F set in 1990. The mean daily temperature of 9.6C/49.3F was itself 1.1C above the 30-year mean and just a shade behind the 9.9C/49.8F set in 1999, several years having bettered this since 1956.

Rainfall totalled 127.1mm/5.00ins and was 74% of the 30-year average, being nothing exceptional. The 40

days of rain was down on average and the lowest figure since 1997. The 7 "wetter" days was also well down and the lowest since 1995. In terms of duration the 117.9 hours was 71% of the 30-year value and the lowest since 1997.

Sunshine was well above average, the 587.1 hours being 161 hours in excess of expectation and the best set of figures since 1990 [596 hrs] putting spring 2003 in second place in terms of sunshine since recording began here in 1956. Despite this the 7 days without sun proved nothing exceptional.

Snow or sleet occurred once with hail on 2 days and thunder on 3. There were 16 frosts in the air and 31 above grass, both figures roughly in line with spring averages. In general conditions the spring of 2003 ended as the second best since records began here in 1956.