

DECEMBER 2003 (3)

DECEMBER SUMMARY.

December 2003 produced an index of -5.30 putting it in the bottom third of all Decembers since 1956 in terms of general conditions.

Temperatures were down on recent years, both the mean daily and mean minimum being below their 30-year averages. This was as a result of the excessive amount of frost registered over the month, the 15 in the air being 6 above, and the 19 over grass being 4 above, their

usual occurrences. In all air frost occurred over 80.3 hours with grass frost occurring over 223 hours giving us a very frosty month, the latter being the 2nd most prevalent in 13 years and the former the 2nd most prevalent in 8 years. Also both soil and earth temperatures were below expectation by as much as 0.6C at the 10cm depth.

The month was also quite wet with 76.8mm/3.02ins

or rain giving the 23rd wettest month in 48 years of data, though still slightly below average for December. Rain fell on 17 days, about normal, the month going some way to replenish the depleted water supplies. Snow was observed on 4 occasions somewhat above expectation though none lay at the 09 hr observation giving another snow-free December. The last lying snow in December was in 2001.

Sunshine was slightly above average, the 3rd best in 20 years with 58.6 hours. In all 10 days were sunless, better than last year but well down on the 4 in 2001. Just 1 day had fog though we had no thunder or hail. Winds were light with many showing an easterly component with a maximum gust to 31 knots/37mph on the 31st. All in all this was not an untypical December save in respect of

lying snow.