

2003

DECEMBER DATA

November ended on a rather wet, but relatively mild, note that was to usher in the new month with similar weather.



Though daytime maxima were not to reach double figures until the 5th nights were relatively mild with no frost recorded until the early evening of the 5th, a day that had seen little cloud and ample sunshine. It has now been two years since we have had any lying snow in December, the last occurrences being on the 30th and 31st December 2001. However, to find any substantial fall of snow in December we have to go back to 1995 when it lay on 6 mornings, though the heaviest incidence of December lying snow was in 1981 when it lay on 23 days of the month, and, incidentally, the last time that we had an "appreciable" spell of winter weather.

Early December was characterised by a marked easterly flow that was to bring in rather cold Continental air giving 4 air and 5 grass frosts over-

all. Daytime maxima reached 10.7C/51.3F on the 5th, falling to a low of -3.7C/25.3F on the 8th, the early morning of the same day leading to a grass minimum as low as -7.3C/18.9F. With high pressure in

charge, days were either sunny or very cloudy and dull, depending on just where the high's centre lay. Rain did continue to fall reaching a total of 25.7mm/1.01ins, the heaviest daily total accumulating on the 1st with 15.6mm/0.61in, though only 3 out of the 10 days saw measurable rain.

Sunshine reached 24.7 hours in total, 6.8 hours of this occurring on the 7th that was a very sunny and cloudless day for December. The maximum black bulb temperature occurred during this period when a high of 30.4C/86.7F was attained on the 5th, though the maximum radiation level was not reached until the 9th. Winds were easterly throughout remaining light at 6knots/7mph with a maximum gust no higher than 30knots/35mph on the 1st. It is uncanny to note the com-

plete absence of gale force winds for so late in the year, as well as snow or sleet. There are definite signs of changes in the climate taking place.

Mid-December was to see further night frost as an anticyclone became established nearby. This gave relatively cloud-free skies by night, though days were decidedly cloudy. Consequently there was little in the way of extensive sunshine. However, frontal systems did penetrate the country and this brought periods of rain, some quite heavy leading to flooding in some areas though here we saw none of this, the heaviest fall for the period being 7.5mm/0.30in on the 12th, a day that saw a total of over 14 hours of precipitation. Daytime temperatures varied wildly, some days being quite balmy with air maxima of 12.9C/55.2F on the 12th, falling to 8.1C/46.6F on the 14th. One thing is however apparent: we are experiencing yet another mild December with a total absence, to date, of any snow or sleet, and all temperatures being significantly above the 30-year means. Winds are also much lighter than could have been expected for the month, no gusts in excess of gale force having been recorded so far, and with the predominant direction from an easterly quarter.

The dearth of annual rainfall continued with insignificant amounts after the 13th, most of this being in the form of condensation either from heavy dew or hoar frost. The 17th and 18th were days of uninterrupted sunshine under cloudless skies, 6.4 hours being recorded on each day. However, where