

Weather moods were variable in December

The outstanding feature of December's weather was its variability.

Rainfall recorded at the Halesowen Climatological Station was 138 mm (5.43in), more than twice the normal; temperatures have been, on average, 1C (1.8F) above expectation and pressure has been abnormally low by as much as 13 mb (0.39in Hg).

We have had far less fog than is customary and yet have also managed to total twice the normal occurrences of snow and sleet.

MILD SPELL

The month began with unseasonably mild conditions, temperatures peaking at 13C (56F) on the fourth.

In fact, the first week produced a mean daily temperature no lower than 9C (49F), which is quite normal at the end of April or beginning of May.

The mean maximum for the same week was 12C (54F), again a reasonable late April temperature.

Though we enjoyed fairly mild conditions, pressure continued low as disturbed weather crossed us from west to east bringing day after day of rain.

There were to be only three rain-free days up to the sixteenth, by which time the rainfall total was 83 mm (3.28in), already 24 per cent in excess of that expected for the whole month.

THUNDER

Into the bargain, very unstable air associated with a low pressure area gave two deafening claps of thunder in the late evening of the fourteenth, the lightning causing local power failures.

Temperatures remained fairly high until the end of the second week, when, by the night of the eleventh, clearing skies brought a widespread air and ground frost and daytime temperatures also took a plunge.

Sunday the sixteenth saw a marked change in the weather as winds became more northerly and much colder air spread in.

Ground frost resulted every night from the sixteenth to twenty-sixth apart from one, with the coldest night December 22, when the grass temperature at 8 am was -8C (18F).

CHRISTMAS

The period December 17 to 24 was also the driest, rain falling on only three days during this time. Days were reasonably sunny but far from warm, the mean daily temperature being only 3C (37F), some 10C (18F) lower than during the first week.

By Thursday, December 20, the air was cold enough for flurries of sleet which turned to snow on the twenty-first and gave a light dusting by Saturday, 22. All seemed set for a White Christmas.

Christmas Eve was bright and sunny, as was Christmas Day itself, though the prolonged sunshine did little to raise temperatures. By Boxing Day further depressions were approaching from the Atlantic and winds freshened to near-gale force by dusk.

GALE

During the night of December 26/27 a southerly gale struck the area causing minor structural damage as winds gusted to over 50 mph.

Associated with this depression was a wide rain belt which reached us by 9 am on the twenty-seventh.

Over the next twelve hours we had continuous heavy rain which produced a total of 44 mm (1.73in), the heaviest December fall for 31 years.

Originating far to the south, this air mass raised afternoon temperatures to a spring-like 11C (52F). Yet, at 4 pm, a shift in the wind to the north-west brought about a sudden fall in temperature of 6C (11F) within an hour.

Winds were to remain mainly in this quarter until the end of the month, resulting in temperatures much closer to normal. December came to its close very quietly, with calm conditions, clear skies and sharp night frosts.