

Feb 80

February turned out nice and warm!

Apart from 1974, when we had a similar mean daily temperature, we have to go back to 1961 to find a warmer February than the one just passed. It has been the third warmest in the last 25 years.

Despite this, the first few days recorded at the Halesowen Climatological Station gave the impression that we were about to undergo another severe spell, air temperatures on the first plunging to -3c (27f) and grass temperatures to -5.7c (22f)

These were in line with those of last winter during its less-severe moments. In fact the mean daily temperature over the first week was no higher than 4.3c (40f) and there were four ground frosts.

SOON GONE!

To strengthen the impression that winter might be making itself felt, snow fell on the first two days of the month.

The fall during the late night of the first gave a substantial accumulation of over 1½ ins by midnight.

However, warmer air turned the snow to rain and those early to bed and late up would have had no indication that snow had fallen at all.

WET DAYS

The beginning of the month was very disturbed, with a succession of low pressure troughs moving across the area. These brought wide belts of rain, every day from

the first to the tenth having measurable rain fall, and five of these being classed as very wet days.

During this period 53.1 mm (2.09ins) of rain fell in 64 hours.

By February 8 winds had moved to a predominantly southerly quarter and temperatures rose appreciably under the influence of this warm Atlantic air.

By February 13 the air temperature during the early afternoon was peaking at 13c (55f). There have been only four occasions since 1956 when a February day has been warmer.

It was also a near-record for warm nights, for the minimum recorded on February 9 was 8.4c (47f) giving us our warmest February night since February 29, 1960.

COLDER

Conditions changed markedly on February 24 as winds became easterly and much colder continental air spread in. This combined with clearing skies gave ground frosts on the mornings of February 24, 26, 28 and 29.

Apart from being exceptionally mild, the month has been unusually dull and cheerless. Morning skies were overcast on no less than 18 occasions and visibility was reduced by heavy mists.

The latter half of the month was particularly bad in this respect, with morning visibility in the region of 1km (¾ ml) or less on nine days.

The clearest morning in this period was February 19 with a visibility of 12km (7½ ml). In contrast, the crisp, cold first few days had very clear air, visibilities being well over 40km (25 ml).

However, we cannot have the best of both worlds, for clear air at this time of the year normally brings very sharp frosts. To gain a warm month we have had to contend with gloomy and often wet days.

Keen gardeners will be pleased to note that all soil temperatures down to one spit are up to 2c (3.5f) above normal, and are now averaging out at just above the growth temperature of 5.6c (42f), though still too low for germination.

MORE RAIN

To summarise the rest of the details. The total rainfall at 88 mm (3.46in) was 37mm (1.46in) above normal and this fell during a period of 116 hours, some 67 hours more than usual for February.

Rain fell on 19 days, six up on expectation, though, with no snow lying on any morning, the month joined those of 1975, 1967, 1961 and 1957 to share a snow-free record.

Ground frosts were seven below, and air frosts ten below expectation. The range in air temperature was 16c (28f) from a low of -3c (27f) on the first to 13c (55f) on the seventeenth.

The mean daily temperature at 5.6c (42f) was itself 2.2c (4f) above normal for February.