

Feb 81

February snow was a chilly reminder!

The winter which we all thought to have passed gave us a timely reminder during the last week of February that we should not pre-judge nature!

Officially, the winter season closes at the end of February, yet it is this month which often shows winter at its worst.

February 1981 has been no exception, even proving extreme in its offerings.

ANOMALIES

Air temperatures have ranged over 19.2C (35F) from 12.7C (55F) on the sixth, to -6.5C (20F) on the fourteenth. Grass temperatures plummeted to -10.6C (13F), also on the fourteenth, while radiation temperatures peaked at 29.6C (85F) on the sixth.

Similar anomalies were noted with rainfall. The total fall until the twentieth was equalled by the single day's fall of snow on the twenty-first, whereas the period from the tenth to the twentieth was rain-free and only five days short of an absolute drought!

The final week was by far the coldest of the winter to date, with a mean daily temperature well below freezing on four out of the seven days.

RAW DAY

Thursday the twenty-sixth was particularly raw with an average temperature of only -1.7C (29F), the air falling to warm to more than 1.2C (34F) at its best during the late afternoon.

Frosts, both in the air and on the ground, were widespread, occurring on every night from the tenth to the twenty-eighth, with the coldest night the fourteenth with an air minimum of -6.5C (20F) and a grass minimum of -10.6C (13F).

In addition there were eleven mornings on which the ground froze.

FOOT OF SNOW

To make matters worse, a front passed over the area during the night of the twenty first - twenty second, and we woke up to a covering of almost a foot of snow with drifts up to four feet in places.

This is equivalent to 0.82 inches of rain, and was the heaviest single snowfall for thirteen years.

MILD START

In contrast the month began with fairly mild conditions and a light south-westerly wind. Low pressure areas from the Atlantic tracked across the country on the second and third, leading to gale force gusts on both days, and some rainfall.

The period February 1 to February 9 was one of predominantly westerly winds, and these brought mild air across the whole country. In fact the warmest day was in this period, on February 6, with a daytime air maximum of 12.7C (55F).

EAST WINDS

Winds changed abruptly on the thirteenth to an easterly quarter, and were to remain here for much of the rest of the month. Fortunately these were

not strong, but they did bring much colder continental air sweeping across the Midlands.

Thursday the twenty fourth was almost calm with mean wind speeds of only 0.8kt. In contrast on Monday the second the mean speed was 14kts with a run of 383 miles over the day.

The total run for the month was 5,298 miles, yielding a mean speed of 6.8kt (8 mph).

COLDER

February as a whole was colder than average by 0.8C (1F) with air frosts seven above normal at 19, and ground frosts five above normal at 23.

Although rainfall at 55mm (2.16 in) was slightly up on usual at 106 per cent, the number of days on which rain fell was down by two, at 11.

At the end of the month snow lay for six days with snow or sleet recorded on seven occasions.

Sunshine was about normal with a total of 57.6 hours, the sunniest day being the thirteenth when 8.3 hours were recorded.

Set against this were 10 days with no measurable sunshine at all, and 16 totally overcast mornings.

A rather cold end to an otherwise fairly reasonable winter which has been the eleventh best in general conditions in the last 26 years.