

LONG TERM RECORDS TUMBLE IN MINI-HEATWAVE.

July 1990 has seen four long-term records either smashed or equalled.

With 289.7 hours sunshine it was the sunniest July on record, beating the previous best of 276 hours set in July 1984 by almost 14 hours. The month also equalled the record number of sunny days (more than 9 hours sun) set last year, and beat the record number of very sunny days (more than 12 hours) first set in 1976, by one.

It also set a new record for the warmest July night, the air minimum of 18.9C (66F) beating that of 17.8C (64F) set last year. The highest temperature of 31.7C (89F) failed to reach the record of 32.6C (90.7F) set on July 3 1976 by less than one degree.

Rainfall also continues well below normal, the month providing only 19.8mm (0.79in) from the expected total of 61.2mm, a mere 32%. The year to date now has a deficit of over 10 inches, with four out of the last seven months being markedly below expectation. Since January 1989 we have now had 12 out of the 19 months showing below average rainfall, the total deficit amounting to 13.6 inches.

The month was also exceptional in other respects. The ground frost of minus 0.2C (31F) on the 3rd was the first such occurrence in 13 years. Gale force gusts to 40kn (46mph) on the 5th were also exceptional, if not unprecedented for July.

Air temperatures were generally up on average, and the radiation temperature of 58.8C (139.7F) on the 11th was the highest since 1976. Soil and earth temperatures are also well above normal, which, with the reduced water table, is producing severe stress in many of the larger shrubs and shallow rooted trees.