

CLIMATE CHANGE IN HALESOWEN. 1956 TO 1997.

WITH OVER 42 YEARS OF DAILY CLIMATE DATA TO HAND IT IS PERHAPS A GOOD TIME TO PUT THE OLD ADDAGE " SUMMERS ARE NOT LIKE THEY WERE WHEN I WAS A LAD" TO THE TEST. THIS MAY BE TRUER THAN IT SEEMS, FOR HALESOWEN, IN LINE WITH ALMOST EVERYWHERE ELSE WORLDWIDE, IS EXPERIENCING CHANGES IN ITS CLIMATE.

RECORDS BEGAN HERE IN 1956, A YEAR WHICH SAW A POOR SUMMER, THE SECOND WORST IN TERMS OF WETNESS AND THE THIRD WORST IN TERMS OF WARMTH IN 42 YEARS. THE SUMMERS OF THIS DECADE APPEAR MUCH WARMER AND DRIER THAN THEY DID THEN, SO, HOW DO THE STATISTICS FIT THIS IMPRESSION ?

FOR SIMPLICITY IT WILL BE SENSIBLE TO VIEW THE PERIOD IN DECADES FROM THE 1960'S TO THE PRESENT LOOKING AT THE MOST PERTINENT FEATURES OF AVERAGE TEMPERATURE, RAINFALL AND SUNSHINE.

FIRSTLY, TEMPERATURES. THE AVERAGE DAILY TEMPERATURE HAS SHOWN A GRAUAL RISE FROM 8.8C IN THE 1960'S TO 9.6C IN THE 1990'S AN INCREASE OF 9%. DAYS WITH MAXIMUM TEMPERATURES OVER 30C TOTALLED 1 IN THE 1960'S AND HAVE REACHED 17 SO FAR IN THE 1990'S

IN TERMS OF RAINFALL WE ARE NOT SO BADLY OFF AS PARTS OF EAST ANGLIA AND THE SOUTH EAST. DURING THE 1960'S THE AVERAGE MONTHLY RAINFALL WAS 64.9MM WITH 12 INDIVIDUAL MONTHS SHOWING TOTALS OF OVER 100MM. BY THE 1990'S THE AVERAGE MONTHLY TOTAL HAD FALLEN TO 56.3MM, A DECLINE OF 13%, WITH JUST 2 INDIVIDUAL MONTHS EXCEEDING 100MM.

SUNSHINE HAS SHOWN THE MOST MARKED CHANGES. IN THE 1960'S THE MEAN MONTHLY SUNSHINE WAS 110.1 HOURS WITH AN ANNUAL AVERAGE OF 85 TOTALLY SUNLESS DAYS. BY THE 1990'S THE AVERAGE MONTHLY SUNSHINE TOTAL HAD REACHED 127.4 HOURS, AN INCREASE OF ALMOST 15%, WITH AN ANNUAL AVERAGE OF 67 TOTALLY SUNLESS DAYS, A FALL OF ALMOST 18%.

YEARS WOULD THEREFORE SEEM TO BE GETTING WARMER, DRIER AND SUNNIER. SINCE THIS TREND SHOWS EVERY SIGN OF CONTINUING THE CONSEQUENCES WILL BE FAR REACHING LEADING TO CHANGES IN AGRICULTURE AND WATER CONSERVATION TO NAME BUT TWO AREAS WHERE CONCERN IS ALREADY BEING EXPRESSED.

THINGS INDEED ARE NOT AS THEY WERE SOME 40 YEARS AGO.

C.G.ROBERTS. CLIMATE STATION DCNN 4839 HALESOWEN.