

gusts during the day, temperatures peaking at 17.5C though it did remain dry during the daylight hours. The intense low moved between the UK and Iceland and fed strong to gale force winds across the country, coupled with heavy rain. During the day winds gusted to 35 knots bringing heavy rain from 1156 UTC to 1338 and again from 1420 to 2400. This continued until 0543 UTC on the 23<sup>rd</sup> giving a grand 24 hour total of 21.9mm of rain by 0900 UTC.

Much of south Wales and parts of Herefordshire and Staffordshire suffered from flooding as the rivers, now on red alert, breached their banks, the Wye being particularly badly affected, a local farmer losing his life in an attempt to save his cattle. With the passage of a cold front at 1630 UTC on the 23<sup>rd</sup> temperatures fell quickly from a previous level of around 14C, thunderstorms being sparked off in the unstable air. Skies cleared and temperatures fell rapidly in the wake of this front as a weak ridge moved quickly across the region, a local ground frost occurring in Harborne.

A little after dawn on the 24<sup>th</sup> winds again began strengthening as a further intense low moved towards the UK bringing yet more heavy rain over already sodden ground. Winds gusted to 40 knots during the afternoon, driving heavy rain across the region adding to the floods in many parts of the Midlands along the Severn, Trent and Wye. A thunderstorm crossed the area between 1210 and 1310 UTC adding further to the problems. An additional 11.9mm of rain accumulated on the 24<sup>th</sup> which was a completely sunless day.

The 25<sup>th</sup> was much brighter, some 8.4 hours of sunshine being recorded from an almost cloudless day. However, it remained cool, afternoon temperatures climbing no higher than 11.4C. A strong ridge developed on the 26<sup>th</sup>, though this quickly passed as a further intensifying low sped across the Atlantic towards the UK. This spread rain into the region from 22.30 UTC on the 26<sup>th</sup>, continuing into the 27<sup>th</sup> as the low tracked across the country towards the Shetlands. Winds again gusted to gale force and further very heavy rain moved across the Midlands during the morning and early afternoon bringing "Red Alerts" to the rivers Wye and Severn, Bewdley being already under water. By 0900 UTC on the 28<sup>th</sup> a further 20.7mm of rain had fallen bringing the month's total to date to a shade under 110mm.

The 28<sup>th</sup> was a somewhat drier day though the westerly winds were still near gale force, gusts to 36 knots being quite frequent. However, it was fairly sunny with 4 hours recorded during the day. The 29<sup>th</sup> saw the deep depression off the north east coast of Scotland with a high well to the south of the UK. This compacted the isobars bringing further strong winds across the region though it was a much sunnier, if colder, day. Some 6 hours of sunshine was recorded though the afternoon maximum was no higher than 11.1C.

By the 30<sup>th</sup> a further deep Atlantic low was making rapid progress towards the south of the country. The Midlands saw a day of broken cloud and good sunny periods after an initial shower around 0900 UTC though it remained cool, temperatures climbing little higher than 10.4C. Overnight on the 30<sup>th</sup>/31<sup>st</sup> cloud again increased as the deepening low tracked across the south of England towards Holland. This brought a further period of moderate to heavy rain from 0600 to 2358 UTC adding another 13mm to the already high total for the month. It was a dismal end to a very wet month, afternoon temperatures reaching a miserable 8.5C as winds backed gradually from west through south east to north east.

### SUMMARY FOR OCTOBER 1998.

A month noted for heavy rainfall and flooding in the Severn and Wye valleys. Total rainfall at 126mm was more than twice the normal for October, the wettest since 1987 and the 5<sup>th</sup> wettest in over half a century. Rain fell on 22 days, the worst figures since 1976 and equal to 1987, with a total of 21.9mm falling on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. Just after noon on the 23<sup>rd</sup> rain was falling at the rate of 42mm an hour for a short period.

Sunshine was the lowest since 1992 though still very close to the average for October. There were 7 days with no sun at all, a little better than expectation, with the sunniest day, the 18<sup>th</sup> providing 8.6 hours, the lowest October daily total since the 8.4 hours in 1990.

Temperatures were close to normal for both the mean daily at 10.1C and the mean minimum at 6.9C. The mean maximum was 0.6C below average at 13.3C which was the lowest figure since 1993. The warmest day, the 21<sup>st</sup>, saw a maximum of 17.5C which was still 1.5C below the 30 year mean.

Thunder occurred on 1 day though there was no incidence of hail. The month was, however, windy with gusts in excess of gale force on 6 days peaking at 40 knots on the 24<sup>th</sup> with the mean hourly speed turning in a figure of 7.4 knots, the highest since 1990.