

THE AUTUMN OF 2001.

This autumn was the warmest on record in figures dating back to 1956. The mean daily temperature of 11.1C [52F] was 0.1C higher than the previous best [1995] and some 1.1C [2.0F] above the seasonal mean. However, in terms of absolute maximum, the 22.0C [71.6F] reached on 28 September was slightly down on average and the lowest value since 1994 (21.8C[71.2F]). Much of this record is due to the exceptional October. The lowest temperature on grass was -6.1C [21.0F], 0.8C above expectation, whilst the number of ground frosts at 14 stood almost 4 above expectation, the same as in 1998.

Rainfall was average and 176mm [6.93ins] lower than the massive total set last autumn. Rain fell on 56 days, well above the 30-year mean and 11 more than expectation, still 8 less than last autumn but then the highest since 1980 with its 58 days. No fall greater than 25.4mm [1inch] occurred, the maximum daily total being 13.5mm [0.53in] on the 19th October.

Sunshine was appreciably below normal by as much as 36.6 hours over the season and the lowest since 1993 with its 260.2 hours. The highest daily total of 11.2 hours occurred on the 4th September, the lowest total for 3 years though the number of sunless days at 16 was 4 better than expectation.

Winds were predominantly from a SW quarter averaging 5.6 knots [7mph], one gale force gust being recorded, the maximum of 38 knots [45.6mph] on the 7th October. Mean cloud cover was 68.8% and the mean 09 hour humidity 86.4%, slightly lower than customary. All soil and earth temperatures show marked positive anomalies by as much as 0.9C at 5cm to 0.3C at 10cm. There were 6 thunderstorms, 4 above average, the same as in 1998 that is equal highest on record.