

DECEMBER 2001.

December was colder this year than since 1996. The mean daily temperature of 3.1°C [37.6°F] was 1.6°C [2.9°F] below the 30-year mean. The mean minimum at -0.2°C [31.6°F] was also the lowest since 1996 and some 2.2°C [4.0°F] below average. However, the warmest day, December 5th with 12.2°C [54.0°F] was very near average for the month. It was the frequency of frost that gave the month its cold feel, with 24 on the ground making this the most since records began here in 1956. The most severe “over-snow” temperature of -11.0°C [12.2°F] occurred on the 31st whilst air frost numbering 18 was the highest since 1981 with a low of -7.5°C [18.5°F] also on the 31st over 2°C [3.6°F] below expectation.

Precipitation totalled 31.8mm [1.25ins], far less than the 142.7mm [5.62ins] of last December. Rain fell on 13 days with snow or sleet on 5, six lower than in 1999. However, the snow lay on 2 days at the end of the month to a depth of 8cm [3ins] on the 30th, the deepest single fall for several years. Three days saw precipitation in excess of 5mm [0.2 in] though we had no exceptional fall during the month.

Sunshine was well above normal with 74.6 hours, making it the sunniest December on record here by over 30 hours. Only 4 days were completely sunless, also the lowest on file the previous low being 8 in 1974. The 22nd produced almost 7 hours with another 4 days accumulating over 5 hours each: an exceptional month in this respect.

Winds were predominantly westerly on 8 days with a mean speed of 5.2 knots [6mph], the maximum gust being to 38 knots [46mph] on the 5th. Just 2 days saw gusts in excess of gale force in what should be a bleak winter month.

Radiation levels were quite high with a maximum value of 0.3 kW/sq.m on the 1st. Total radiation for the month was marginally below 935 kW/sqm.