

JANUARY 2003 (2)

to the influence of the North Sea on the air flowing from the cool Continent across the "warmer" water.

Periods of light rain or drizzle still continued on and off, a total of just 1.5mm/0.06in

maxima reaching 9.4°C/48.9°F on the 15th. Over the week air temperatures ranged from a maximum of 10.3°C/50.5°F on the 20th to a low of 2.7°C/36.9°F on the 18th, grass temperatures falling to -0.2°C/31.6°F, also on



falling over the week though, despite this low total, only one day, the 11th, remained "rain-free". Winds on the whole continued light averaging 6.3kn/7.2mph with a maximum gust of 30kn/35mph on the 14th, not unduly severe by winter standards. Black bulb radiation temperatures were, on the whole, depressed, the maximum for the week reaching just 29.8°C/85.6°F on the 11th with a peak radiation level no higher than 0.313 kw/sq.m on the previous day. As the second week drew to a close the forecast spoke of warmer, but wetter, weather reaching the area as winds took on a more westerly, zonal, flow coming to us from the mid Atlantic.

True to the predictions, winds were more westerly, or south-westerly, as the new week began, and temperatures quickly reflected this, daytime

the 18th a considerable improvement over the previous week. Black bulb temperatures peaked at 32.9°C/91.2°F on the 19th with radiation maxima topping 0.312 kw/sq.m on the 21st. Winds were in a southerly quarter on 6 days, the temperatures reflecting this, and averaged 6kn/7mph with a maximum gust of 31kn/36mph occurring on the 20th as a cold front passed. With the change in wind direction coming from a warm, but moist Atlantic ocean, the air was very wet and rain occurred on every day bar one totalling 27.1mm/1.07in for the week, the wettest day, January 18th providing some 11.7mm/0.46in of this. With full cloud cover on 5 days, sunshine was depressed, and totalled a mere 6.7 hours for the week, far less than is seen over half a day in summer.

Snow and sleet were again noticeable by their absence and neither was there any occurrence of hail or thunder. Humidity's remained very high averaging 90.1% for the week and peaking at 95% on the 18th that was by far the worst day of the week. The best day, if it can merit the title, was the 15th, since it did produce over 3 hours sunshine and a night minimum no lower than 7.2°C/45.0°F. As conditions go, it appears as if we are again experiencing a rather mild winter season with many of the Continental snow resorts clear of any snow at levels below 600 - 700 metres. This is now becoming serious enough to lead to English skiers, at any rate, seeking the more dependable resorts in the American or Canadian holiday spots, and deserting the once popular areas such as Davis or St. Moritz.

As the fourth week began the forecast inclined towards even warmer weather, though a few cold nights were to pass prior to this. The air temperatures over the week ranged from a maximum of 14.2°C/57.6°F on the 26th, a new January record, to a low of -0.9°C/30.4°F on the 24th. The previous record of 13.3°C/55.9°F set in 1957 was breached when exceptionally mild air from the south Atlantic spread across the country. Black bulb radiation temperatures peaked at 41.8°C/107.2°F on the 25th, the first breach of the 100°F mark for this year. The grass fell to -4.5°C/23.9°F in the pre-dawn hours on the 24th under clear skies resulting in quite exceptional temperature ranges for the week.