

Irish Meteorological Society

Newsletter

Number 32

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**The then Taoiseach Mr. C.J. Haughey with the Secretary-General of W.M.O.
Prof. G.O. Obasi at the opening of the International Conference on Water and
the Environment, held in Dublin in January.** photo: Irish Times

President: J.A.Scott

Secretary: A.Kelly

Irish Meteorological Society

The Irish Meteorological Society was founded in 1981 with the object of promoting an interest in meteorology in Ireland and disseminating meteorological knowledge, pure and applied. Membership is welcomed from those with an interest in meteorology, climate and the environment. The Society organises lectures, seminars, outings and an annual dinner for members and guests. An A.G.M. takes place, usually in April each year to coincide with the annual one-day seminar.

Summaries of lectures and other articles of meteorological interest are published in the Society's Newsletter. Articles and comments on articles are welcomed from members for publication.

The address of the Society is : Irish Meteorological Society,
c/o Irish Meteorological Service,
Glasnevin Hill,
Dublin 9

As of 12/91, annual subscription rates are as follows: Greater Dublin Area £12,
elsewhere £8.

Students are welcomed at half the stated rates.

The officers and committee members for 1991/1992 are as follows:

*President	Dr. J.A. Scott
Vice-President	Mr. S.F. Browne
Secretary	Mr. A. Kelly
Assistant-Secretary	Mr. J. Doyle
+Treasurer	Mr. S. McCarthy
*Assistant-Treasurer	Mr. M. Mansfield
	*Mr. P. Vardon
	Mr. G. Fleming
	Mr. K. Commins
	+Mr. S. Walsh
	+Ms. E. Cusack
	Dr. M. Joyce

* indicates those whose terms of office expire in 1992

+ indicates those eligible for re-election in 1992

Members of the Society may subscribe to the Monthly Weather Bulletin published by the Climate and Applications Division of the Irish Meteorological Service at the preferential (as of 12/91) annual subscription of £15, by kind permission of the Irish Meteorological Service. The Society gratefully acknowledges the assistance and facilities which it enjoys from the Irish Meteorological Service. Members may also receive "Weather" magazine, published by the Royal Meteorological Society, again at preferential rates. Details from the Treasurer at the above address.

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The Rhyme of an Ancient (?) Mariner

Sean Byrne has another contribution in this issue on his experiences in WW2, while working for the British Met. Office. He recalls that one of the least popular met.'postings' was to the station on the Orkney Islands, off the North of Scotland. One night, during a reasonably quite period of teleprinter activity, the following ode came over the circuit. He attributes it to a Capt. Hamish Blair - probably of the Royal Navy - and it is reprinted below, with apologies to anyone who has more fond memories of the Orkneys.

The Bloody Orkneys

*This bloody town's a bloody cuss,
No bloody trains, no bloody bus,
And no one cares for bloody us,
In bloody Orkney.*

*The bloody roads are bloody bad,
The bloody folk are bloody mad,
They'd make the brightest bloody sad,
In bloody Orkney.*

*All bloody clouds and bloody rain,
No bloody kerbs, no bloody drains,
The Council's got no bloody brains,
In bloody Orkney.*

*Everything is bloody dear,
A bloody bob for bloody beer,
And is it good? No bloody fear,
In bloody Orkney.*

*The bloody dances make you smile,
The bloody band is bloody vile,
It only cramps your bloody style,
In bloody Orkney.*

*No bloody sport, no bloody games,
"No bloody fear!,"- the bloody dames,
Won't even give their bloody names,
In bloody Orkney.*

*Best bloody place is bloody bed,
With bloody ice on bloody head,
You might as well be bloody dead,
In bloody Orkney.*

Service News

The Secretary-General of the W.M.O., Prof. Goodwin Obasi, in Dublin for the International Conference on Water and the Environment, visited Met. H.Q. in Glasnevin on Monday, January 27th.

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New additions to the Voluntary Observing Ships' fleet are Seahorse Minder and Seahorse Supporter which are supply and safety vessels for the Marathon Gas Platform, of the Cork coast.

Another recent addition is Asgard II, the Irish Sail Training vessel, whose Master, Capt. Tom McCarthy will deliver the Society's Annual Guest Lecture on March 11th.

The Kish Lighthouse will cease weather observations after March 1992 and it's reports will be substituted by those from the Bailey Lighthouse and the Dun Laoire Harbour Commissioners.

oooOOOooo

Paddy O'Shea (in Valentia) and Tom O'Kelly (from C.A.F.O. to Dublin Airport) have both been promoted to S.M.O.

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Society News

The venue for the A.G.M and One-Day meeting on Saturday April 25th will be the **Tara Towers Hotel**, Merrion Road, Dublin 4.

Another Look at the Big Wind

Gerald Fleming reviews *"The Big Wind"* by Peter Carr, published by White Row Press, £4.95

The great storm of January 1839 has entered the folk memory of this country as "Oiche na Gaoithe Moire" or the Night of the Big Wind. It has recently featured in two publications; one a popular account entitled "The Big Wind", the other a sort of compendium of storms authored by Hubert Lamb: "Historic Storms of the North Sea, British Isles and Northwest Europe". It is on the first publication that this review concentrates, a book more accessible to the general reader but not without its deficiencies.

The book is divided into two quite distinct halves. To take the second half first, this is a compilation of extracts from contemporary newspaper accounts of the storm, gathered together on a town-by-town basis and alphabetically arranged. That such accounts exist is testimony to the strength of the newspaper industry of the day; it seems that over 80 local papers were in regular publication! Journalists of the time would have had little to learn about purple prose and sensationalism from today's tabloid writers; at least five locations are identified as being the place where "the worst damage has been suffered", and there seems to have been wholesale lifting of accounts from one publication to another; an identical incident is described as occurring in both Athlone and Longford.

When the attributions of the various accounts are examined more carefully, it becomes apparent that in many cases the account of damage in, say, Drogheda comes from a paper published in Tralee, the description of happenings in Clare being reported from Waterford or some other distant place. Given the (lack of) communication facilities at the time, we must conclude that many of the newspaper accounts are second, third, or even fourth hand. This section of the book would have been much stronger had the author limited his selection of extracts to those published by each newspaper pertaining to its own local area.

The first section of the book, comprising four fairly short chapters, synthesises the newspaper reports to give a coherent account of the storm, from the first intimations that something, meteorologically, was up (the previous afternoon was 'unnaturally' warm) to a description of the consequent damage and accounts of many narrow escapes. Most of the destruction seems to have occurred in Connacht, North Leinster, and East and Mid Ulster.

Fires caused many deaths; the houses of the poor in those days were mud-walled and roofed with thatch, with no chimney as such but a hole in the roof to allow smoke to escape. Fires were not extinguished at night, but damped down to be revived next morning, and no doubt to provide some residual heat during the night hours. The increasing wind fanned the embers into flame, in many cases setting the thatch on fire and ultimately causing complete destruction of the dwelling. Much of the damage was in country areas, where thousands of trees were felled and many ricks of hay and straw scattered from the haggards, leaving farmers with no animal feed until the spring growth. The industrialised North-East saw the collapse of many factory chimneys, while both Protestant and Catholic steeples were ecumenically levelled.

The fourth chapter of the book contains the authors analysis of the event from various perspectives, and this chapter is both the book's strength and weakness. The meteorological analysis can most charitably be described as meaningless, and the author would have been well advised to steer clear of an area of which his understanding is obviously poor. Far better are his thoughts on why the memory of the storm has lived on; apart from the recent occurrence of 'Hurricane Charlie' it is the only storm to have been granted a name in the folk memory.

Allied to its undoubted ferocity was the fact that it reached its peak during the small hours of the morning; its psychological effect must therefore have been magnified. The storm occurred at a time in history when a scientific understanding of the weather had not begun to develop, and when the popular interpretation of weather was religious or superstitious in nature. The fact that so many newspapers existed to record the destruction has certainly helped preserve its memory, but we should not forget that the insurance business had also begun, and it was probably in few peoples interest to understate the damage!

All in all the book is long on anecdotal evidence and contains some good thoughts on the persistence of the storm in the folk memory. It does not, however, add much in this area to what has already been published by Shields and Fitzgerald (Irish Geography, Vol.22 1989), and the latter paper also provides a superb meteorological analysis of the event. The book includes a number of woodcut-type illustrations which are rather melodramatic in content.

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Prospects for Spring 1992 in England, Wales and Ireland.

The winter was mild, as predicted, with a mean temperature of 6.5C (+1.2C over normal) here in Blackrock, with all three months having temperatures above normal, as was indicated in the forecast. Rainfall, however, was generally below normal especially in central and Eastern districts. Here the total rainfall amounted to only 77mm, roughly a third of normal. The figure for England and Wales was 154mm, just over half normal, making it the driest winter since 1976. The reason for this dryness was due to the extreme anticyclonicity of the season, with a mean surface pressure anomaly some 12mb in excess of normal. Dry mild winters are good indicators for warm dry summers, but the following springs are not so easy to predict.

In the meteorological record, there have been 17 dry winters (less than 170mm, or <70% of normal EWR), that have also not been cold. These in turn have been followed 8 dry, 3 normal and only 4 wet springs. In addition, 9 out of the 17 springs recorded mean temperatures close to normal, 4 were cold and 2 were mild. We might note also that recent springs have been rather mild and not wet. 1979, 1981 and 1983 were the most recent wet springs. And the last 5 springs have had mean temperatures slightly above normal, following on the previous 4 springs all of which were cold.

Therefore, this spring is likely to be overall drier than normal, especially in Eastern areas, with near normal temperatures. However, we can as usual expect considerable variability of weather over the period. Going on the evidence we might tentatively predict that May will be the driest of the spring months, while the early part of the season will see some very unsettled spells with strong winds. The outlook for the summer is good.

Rob Weatherill. (Based on Manley's CET temperature series and EWR figures. These data go back over 300 years) 1.3.92

ROYAL METEOROLOGICAL SOCIETY COURSES IN 1992

Mountain Weather 3 - 8 April Cost TBA

Directed by Mr D J George, formerly of Cardiff Weather Centre, in conjunction with the Sports Council. A course for those who go into the mountains for work or leisure, including leaders of parties, those working for Mountain Leadership Instructor qualifications, Duke of Edinburgh Award work, etc and those connected with the National Curriculum work in Geography or Physics. Further details from the Advanced Field Study Centre, Ty-r Morwydd, Pen y Pound, Abergavenny, Gwent HP7 5UD

Understanding Snowdonia's Weather 12 - 17 April From £140

A new course, led by Mr D J George, formerly Cardiff Weather Centre. For those who lead walking groups in mountainous areas, and others interested in work or leisure in mountains. Further details from course organiser: Twm Elias, Snowdonia National Park Study Centre, Plas Tan y Bwlch, Maentwrog, Blaenau Ffestiniog, Gwynedd, LL41 3YU

Understanding Weather 31 July - 7 August £199

Malham Tarn Field Centre, Yorkshire. Directed by Dr Keith Weston, University of Edinburgh, and Dr David Warren. A course in which you are immersed in the weather and all things meteorological in beautiful surroundings 1300 ft up in the Yorkshire Dales. A full week's programme of talks, outdoor work and films includes learning about weather satellites, a forecasting competition and the launching and tracking of hydrogen-filled balloons Useful for GCSE teachers and students.

Weather and Climate 26 August - 2 September residential £199

The Leonard Wills Field Centre, Nettlecombe Court, Somerset. Directed by Dr Bob Riddaway and Dr Geoff Jenkins, Meteorological Office. Do you want to understand the weather and find out how to make your own weather forecasts? Do you want to track weather balloons? Do you want to understand the debate about global warming and other environmental issues? If you do, this is the course for you. The course is suitable for anyone with a lively curiosity and an interest in weather and climate. It is useful for teachers and students.

Weather and Bird Migration 6 - 11 September £165

Gibraltar Point Field Station, Skegness, Lincolnshire. Directed by Mr Malcolm Walker and Mr Al Venables, University of Wales College of Cardiff. This course is intended for bird-watchers who wish to study the ways in which migrations, populations and light patterns of birds depend upon weather and climate. Much of each day is spent in the field; and the aim is chiefly to relate the species seen, and their numbers, to the current weather situation.

Weather Under Sail Aboard "Hoshi" 19 - 26 September £395

Directed by Mr Bill Giles, BBC Weatherman. Run in conjunction with the Island Cruising Club Sailing from Salcombe in Devon, the course takes place aboard the Club's 86ft classic Edwardian schooner "HOSHI", with berths for 9 plus Course Leader, Skipper and Mate and more importantly the full time Cook. The destination will be the waters of the English Channel, and you will learn not only about meteorology afloat, but also about sailing a traditional gaff rigged boat, from measuring weather elements to influencing the ship's course on the basis of your forecast.

Understanding Mountain Weather 2 - 3 May 10 - 11 October £96

Directed by Mr D J George, formerly of Cardiff Weather Centre, in conjunction with the Sports Council. Weekend courses for those who go into the mountains for work or leisure, including leaders of parties, those working for Mountain Leadership instructor qualifications, Duke of Edinburgh Award work, etc and those connected with the National Curriculum work in Geography or Physics; includes one field trip and informal lectures. Bookings (including deposit of £50, deducted from course fee of £96) to National Centre for Mountain Activities, Plas-y-Bremin, Capel Curig, Gwynedd, LL24 0ET

For further details of the above courses please write, stating your specific interest to:
The Executive Secretary, Royal Meteorological Society, 104 Oxford Road, Reading, Berks. RG1 7LJ

Note: All prices are in Sterling

Irish Meteorological Society

Guest Lecture

"Tall Ships and Tall Tales"

--Meteorology and Sail Training Vessels--

by

Capt. F.T. McCarthy

Master, Asgard II

Winner of the Cutty Sark Trophy in the 1991 Tall Ships Race, Capt. Tom McCarthy, Master of the Irish Sail Training Vessel Asgard II, comes well-equipped to talk to the Society on meteorology and sail training. The talk will be preceded by a brief film showing the difficulties encountered in the early 1900s by those who attempted to sail round Cape Horn in severe weather conditions.

Venue:

Lecture Theatre 243

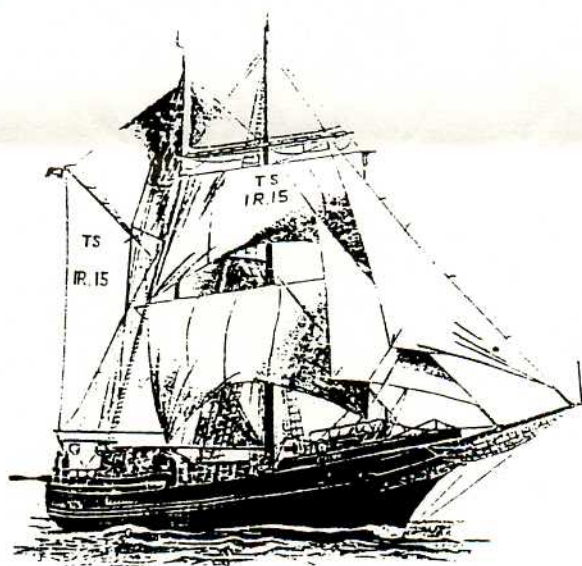
Earlsfort Terrace /U.C.D.

Dublin 2

on

Wednesday March 11th 1992

at 8.00 pm.



Admission Free

Open to the Public