

# Leicestershire Weather Sayings



by  
*Jonathan Wilshere*



## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

### *Cover photograph*

Deer in snow-covered Bradgate Park.

*(Reproduced by permission of Mr. L. Wilkes, Editor of "Leicester Advertiser" in whose paper this photograph appeared on 11 January 1980).*

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*Items 2, 3 and 11 are taken from the 1924 Bodley Head edition of "Memoirs of Thomas Bewick written by himself 1822-8".*

*Items, 1, 4, 6 and 9 are from photographs by the compiler, all taken at Kirby Muxloe, Leicestershire.*

*Item 7 is from a photograph by Mrs. M. E. Wilshire, taken at Kirby Muxloe, Leicestershire.*

*Items 8 and 10 are taken from copies of an unknown Victorian original.*

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## PREFACE

*"Acquaint thyself with proverbs, for of them thou shalt learn instruction."*

Ecclesiasticus c.8 v.8.

THIS personal collection of nearly two hundred local weather sayings, some of them resurrected from oblivion, is representative rather than complete, and has been assembled as a relief from heavier historical research. The only previous collection of local weather lore comprised a mere dozen items and formed part of *Leicestershire County Folk-lore*, edited by C.J. Billson more than eighty years ago. The time is therefore long overdue for a wider assemblage to be available. It is believed that almost all the sayings collected here have or have had local, or at least Midlands' usage, often with minor variations from county to county, or even from place to place. Occasionally, it has not been possible to prove specific Leicestershire currency, although the saying concerned may be well enough known to suspect that it has universal application. It is emphasised that, as far as possible, it is primarily weather lore and not countryman's lore that is dealt with, although there is an obvious overlap from time to time. The dividing line between the two is often very narrow and complete separation is impossible.

The chosen sequence of sections has been adopted to form varied and interesting reading rather than strictly adhering to any rigid logical order. The sky, the country forecaster's most valued tool, comes first, followed by rain, which many regard as a predominate part of the English climate! The Calendar months are considered before the year and its seasons, since there is greater richness in the sayings related to individual months. Obviously, some overlap between sections is inevitable and, to avoid cluttering the text, cross references have been kept to the minimum.

The only well-known work on general aspects of the subject, including world-wide examples, is *Weather Lore*, compiled by R. Inwards and first published in 1869. A few of the well-known sayings, including the "red sky" one, are unaccountably ignored in that compilation. Much early weather lore was related to ships, sailors and the sea: as far as inland Leicestershire is concerned, this influence can largely be ignored.

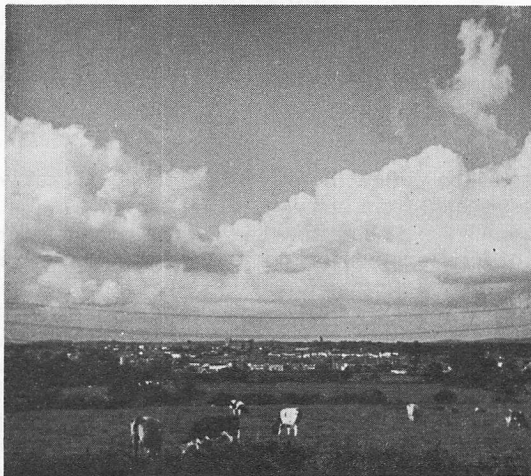
The compiler will be pleased to receive additional weather sayings, whether or not they are still in vogue locally, for possible future use in a subsequent edition.

*November 1980.*

*Jonathan Wilshire*

### A NOTE CONCERNING DATING

The Julian Calendar was in use in England until 1752 when the Gregorian was introduced. The changeover necessitated eleven days (3 to 13 inclusive) being cut out of the calendar in September that year. This means that historically the dates assigned to Saints' days and other festivals, upon which some weather lore is based, must have eleven days added to them, if true historical comparison is to be made. Except in the case of St. Swithin's day, no mention of this is made in the text, as it would be monotonous to refer to the matter in every instance.



*"Shower" cumulus dispersing, Spring 1973.*

## SKY

*"Men judge by the complexion of the sky  
The state and inclination of the day."*

W. Shakespeare  
(Richard II).

1.

*"Red sky at night,  
Shepherd's delight.  
Red sky in the morning,  
Shepherd's warning."*

Several variants of these universal couplets are known; the second couplet sometimes stands alone. A form substituting "rainbow" for "red sky" is probably obsolete (but see No.13). Much of this country's weather passes from west to east, and in these circumstances, a red sunset will usually mean the air to the west is dry with the prospect of fine weather in the short term, at least. This is one of the most reliable sayings in weather lore, accurate three times in five. However, as the immediately following examples illustrate, not all red skies at sunset are to be trusted: the shade of red is all-important.

2.

*"If the sun in red should set,  
The next day surely will be wet.  
If the sun should set in grey,  
The next will be a rainy day."*

3.

*"If the sun goes pale to bed,  
'Twill rain tomorrow, 'tis said."*

4. *"If the evening be grey and the morning red,  
The lamb and ewe will go wet to bed."*

OR

*"Evening grey and morning red,  
Send the shepherd wet to bed."*

5. *"If red the sun begins his race,  
Be sure that rain will fall apace."*

In some versions, 'before' is substituted for 'begins' in line one and 'the' for 'that' in line two.

6. *"Grey mists at dawn,  
The day will be warm."*

7. *"A cloudy morning bodes a fair afternoon."*

This saying gives rise to the belief that "it will be brighter later." Conversely, "too bright first thing" may mean a bright early morning giving way to cloud and rain.

8. *"When clouds appear like rocks and towers,  
The earth's refreshed by frequent showers."*

9. *"Mountains in the morning,  
Fountains in the evening."*

Both 8 and 9 emphasise "towering" cumulus cloud formations.

10. *"Trace in the sky the painter's brush,  
The wind around you soon will rush."*

A reference to the cirrus family of clouds.

11. *"Mackerel sky, mackerel sky,  
Never long wet and never long dry."*

This is a reference to cirrocumulus cloud formations.

When using the sky as a forecasting "tool", it is important to consider the height of the clouds and whether or not cloud cover is increasing or decreasing. One local saying (with variants) states that *"If, by mid-morning, there is enough blue sky to make a pair of sailor's trousers, the weather will clear up."*

12. *"Rainbow to windward, foul falls the day,  
Rainbow to leeward, damp runs away."*

13. *"Rainbow at night,  
Fair weather in sight."  
"Rainbow at morn,  
Fair weather, 'tis gorn."*



*"Riding through Rain"*

## RAIN

*"Be it dry or be it wet,  
The weather'll always repay its debt."*

14. *"Rain before seven,  
Stop before eleven."*

Many versions, substitute 'fine' for 'stop' in the second line, whilst a few prefer 'cease' or 'clear'.

15. *"Wet Friday,  
Wet Sunday,  
Wet week."*

A series of depressions often take a week to clear an area during an unsettled spell; after the first depression has passed, there may be a few hours of better weather before a secondary depression arrives. When Sunday was the only day of leisure in a working week, the prospect of a wet day would be particularly dismal.

16. *"Rain from the east  
Lasts three days at least."*

Some versions say *"twenty-four hours at least."*

17. *"When the distant view is clear,  
Rain will very soon be here."*

Conversely, a misty horizon would be regarded as a sign of good weather. (See also Local Topography section).

18. *"If it rains on Christmas Day, there should be good grass but  
very little hay."*

Some versions say 'bad' for 'little'.

19.

*"St. Swithun's Day, if it do rain,  
For forty days it will remain.  
St. Swithun's Day an' it be fair,  
For forty days 'twill rain nae mair."*

The more usual modern spelling is "Swithin". Some versions use 'if thou dost rain' in the second half of the first line. This well-known saying is rarely borne out by events and is certainly post-mediaeval in origin. St. Swithin's day is 15 July, although the amended date in our present Calendar should strictly be 26 July, due to the eleven days left out of the year 1752. Tradition states that Swithin (died 862) directed that he should be buried outside 'in a vile and unworthy place, under the drip of the eaves, where the sweet rain of heaven might fall upon my grave'. However, in 971, after the building of Winchester Cathedral, the monks wished to move his body to a prepared shrine inside. Torrential downpours continued for forty days, and prevented the move during this time. This tradition is not borne out by the historical facts.

Another saying, with no known local usage, is *"If it rains on St. Mary's day (2 July) it will rain for a month"*.

The best that can be said in support of these weather proverbs is that July can contain a period of unsettled weather, but it is unlikely to last forty days. However, any month can produce a similar state of affairs.

20. *"If it does not rain on St. Michael (29 September) and St. Gallis (16 October) the following spring will be dry and propitious."*

21. *"It's raining by planets."*

A local saying of antiquity referring to rain falling on one field but not on a near or adjoining one.

22. *"Mizzling."*

A Midlands term for "misty drizzle"; its use is found by 1701 when it is used in the Rector's book at Clayworth, Nottinghamshire, among the weather notes written by the Rev. William Sampson.

23. *"It's raining cats and dogs."*

A proverb with pagan origins. In Norse mythology both cat and dog were attendants of Odin, the Storm God. The cat's influence signified downpours, whilst witches riding on broom-sticks often appeared in the form of cats. The dog, a member of the wolf family, signified strong gusts of wind. The expression appears in literature by 1653. There is also a version, *"It's raining pitch-forks and shovels."*

24. *"It rained in torrents."*

An expression sometimes used without the 'in' that frequented weather reports in local newspapers in the late 1700s and in the last century. It was used in circumstances in which we now talk of torrential rain or torrential downpours.



25. *"It never rains but it pours."*

An expression signifying that when it starts raining, it never seems to stop, leading to another saying, *"it's a real wet day."*

26. *"It's raining in sheets" or "It's sheeting down."*

This expression should only be used when the rain is sufficiently heavy seriously to impair visibility.

27. *"It's not stopping to rain."*

*"It's throwing it down."*

These last two expressions, together with the cruder *"It's chucking it down"* are further illustrations of sayings used to describe heavy rain.

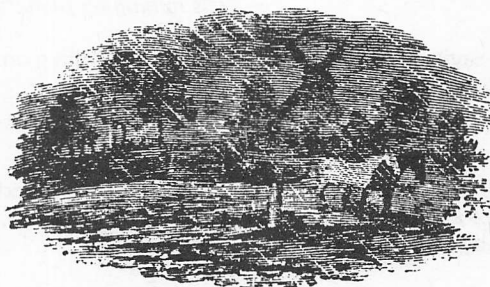
28. *"After rain comes fair weather."*

A similar expression is *"A wet morning may turn to a dry afternoon."* (See No. 7).

29. *"It's black over Bill's mother's."*

One way of describing an impending storm, particularly used in industrial parts of the county.

*"Impression of Rain"*



## The CALENDAR MONTHS

### January

30. *"JANUARY warm,  
The Lord have mercy."*

31. *"A wet January,  
A wet Spring."*

32. *"If the grass grows in Janiveer,  
It grows the worse for all the year."*



Alternatively, *"The grass that grows in Janiveer grows no more all the year."*

33. *"If you see grass in January,  
Lock your grain in your granary."*
34. *"A January spring is nothing worth."*
35. *"March in January,  
January in March."*
36. *"Who in Janiveer sows oats  
Gets gold and groats,  
Who sows in May  
Gets little that way."*
37. *"If January's calends be summerly gay,  
'Twill be winterly weather  
To the calends of May."*

Calends was the first day of the month in the Roman calendar.

38. *"If St. Paul's day (25 January) be fair and clear,  
Then it betides a happy year."*
39. *"If birds begin to whistle in January,  
Frosts to come."*

This is a Rutland version of a saying which substitutes 'sing' for 'whistle' in the first line and with a second line *"Frosts are on the way."*

Most sayings associated with January refer to mild conditions, but St. Hilary's day (14 January) is traditionally regarded as the coldest day of the year.

## **February**

40. *"All the months in (of) the year  
Curse a fair FEBRUEER."*
41. *"Much February snow  
A fine summer doth show."*
42. *"February fill-dyke,  
Be it black or be it white,  
But if it be white,  
'Tis better to like."*

February, even allowing for its shortness, is one of the driest months of the year. However, ditches are often full, due to lack of evaporation in winter and rain or melted snow from January.

43. *"If in February there be no rain,  
'Tis neither good for hay nor grain."*

Alternatively, *"If February bring(s) no rain, 'Tis neither good for grass and grain"*.  
Conversely, *"Rain in February is as good as manure."*

44. *"A February spring is nothing worth."*

45. *"February doth cut and sheer."*

46. *"In February, if thou hearest thunder,  
Thou shalt see a summer wonder."*

47. *"If Candlemas (2 February) be fair and clear,  
There'll be two winters in the year."*

There are several alternative versions, one adds 'day' after 'Candlemas' and substitutes 'bright' for 'clear' and alters the second line to read

*"We'll have two winters in one year."*

Another version uses the amended first line and then continues —

*"Winter will have another flight;  
But if Candlemas Day be clouds (shower) and rain,  
Winter is gone and will not come again."*

48. *"Snow at Candlemas  
Stops to handle us."*

49. *"February make a bridge (of ice)  
And March breaks it."*

### March

50. *"MARCH comes in like a lamb,  
And goes out like a lion."*

A period of windy weather is common towards the end of March.  
Conversely, *"in like a lion, out like a lamb"*. (i.e. a windy start and a calm end.).

51. *"March in Janiveer,  
Janiveer in March, I fear."*

52. *"March winds and April showers  
Bring forth May flowers."*

Alternative versions include

*"(A) windy March and (a) sunny April make a beautiful May."*

and                   *"(A) windy March and (a) rainy April make a beautiful May."  
                          "A windy March foretells a fine May."*

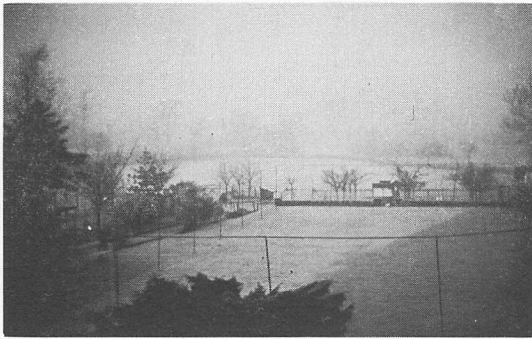
53.                   *"Thunder in March,  
                          Floods in May."*

54.                   *"A peck of March dust  
                          Is worth a king's ransom."*

55.                   *"So many mists in March you see,  
                          So many frosts in May will be."*

More simply expressed as

*"Fog in March  
Frost in May."*



*Sun breaking through mist,  
January 1950.*

56.                   *"If March borrows from April  
                          Three days, and they be ill,  
                          April borrows of March again  
                          Three days of wind and rain."*

57.                   *"March many weathers; April and May the key of the whole year."*

58.                   *"March search, April try, May will prove if you live or die."*

A nineteenth-century version of this in local dialect reads —

*"March will sarch  
An' Epril troy  
But May will see  
If ye live or day."*

According to Francis Bacon (1561-1626) a dry March and a dry May portend a wholesome summer if there be a showering April between.

## April

59.                   *"APRIL weather: rain and sunshine both together."*

60.                   *"When April blows his horn,  
'Tis good for (both) hay and corn."*

61.                   *"A cold April  
The barn will fill."*

62.                   *"If the first three days of April be foggy,  
There'll be a flood in June."*

## May

63.                   *"A swarm of bees in MAY  
Is worth a load of hay."*

OR

*"A wet May  
Brings a good load of hay."*

64.                   *"A dry May and a dripping June  
Brings all things in tune."*

The second line can also read *"Keeps everything in tune."*  
*"A dry May portends a wholesome summer".*

65.                   *"A leaky May and a dry June  
Puts all in tune."*

*("Rain in May makes bread for the whole year.")*

66.                   *"A hot May makes a fat churchyard."*

67.                   *"A cold May and a windy,  
A full barn will find ye."*

An alternative second line reads *"Makes a fat barn and a findy."* (i.e. Grain of good weight.)

68.                   *"A May flood  
Never did any good."*

69.                   *"Mist(s) in May, heat in June  
Make the harvest come right soon."*

An alternative second line is as in No. 64.



70. *"Button to the chin  
Till May be in."*

71. *"Cast ne'er a clout  
'Ere May be out."*

OR

*"Cast not a clout  
Till May be out."*

An alternative version refers to 'the May' in the second line. It is unwise to leave off clothing at the first taste of summer.

## June

72. *"A swarm of bees in JUNE  
Is worth a silver spoon."*

73. *"Calm weather in June  
Sets the corn (ale) in tune."*

An alternative first line is *"A leak in June . . ."*

74. *"June damp and warm  
Does the farmer no harm."*

75. *"If on the 8th of June it rain,  
It foretells a wet harvest, men sain."*

76. *"If St. Vitus' day (15 June) be rainy weather,  
It will rain for thirty days together."*

Some versions say 'forty days' and this seems a variant on St. Swithin's day.

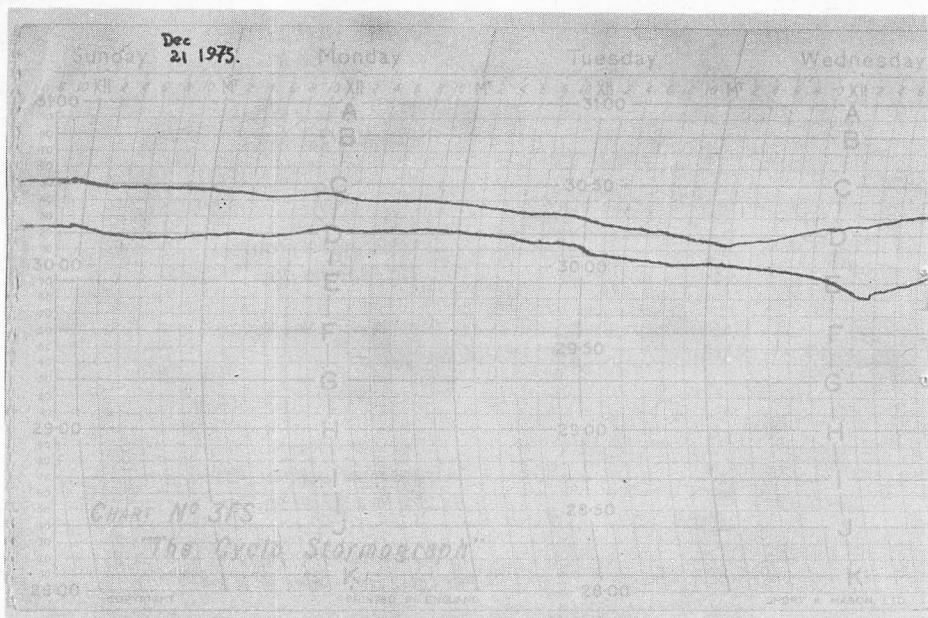
## July

77. *"A swarm of bees in JULY  
Is not worth a (butter)fly."*

78. *"If the first of July be rainy weather,  
It will rain, more or less, for four weeks together."*

79. *"All the tears St. Swithin (15 July) can cry  
St. Bartlemy's mantle wipes them dry."*

The second half of the last line can sometimes read *"can wipe dry."* (St. Swithin's day, see also No. 19).



*Barograph trace for the two weeks commencing 21st December 1975. The drop in pressure is significant.*

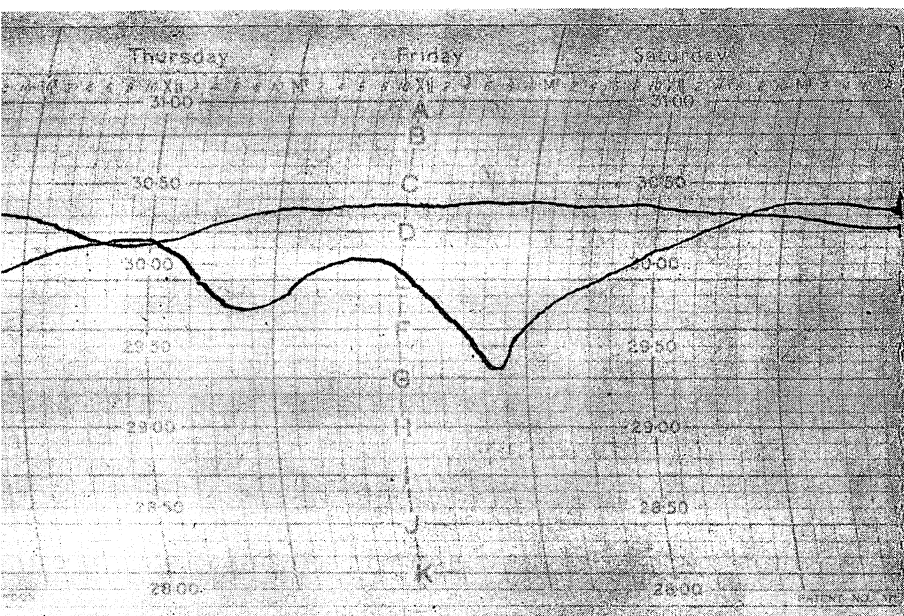
## August

80. *"Dry AUGUST and warm doth harvest no harm."*
81. *"If Bartlemy's day (24 August) be fair (fine) and clear,  
Then (you may) hope for a prosperous autumn that year."*

In some places, 15 August (Assumption of the B.V.M.) is substituted for St. Bartholomew's day.



*Flooded lawn after  
thunderstorm,  
August 1954.*



sure to 29.35 inches shows the great storm of the night of Friday 2nd January 1976.

A more modern version reads

*"If St. Bartholomew's day be clear,  
A prosperous autumn comes that year."*

82.

*"St. Bartholomew  
Bring the cold dew."*

**September**

83.

*"SEPTEMBER dries up ditches or breaks down bridges."*

84.

*"September blow soft  
Till the fruit's in the loft."*

Ah exhortation rather than a "true" weather saying!

85.

*"Fair on September the first,  
Fair for the month."*

86.

*"St. Matthew (21 September)  
Bring (the rain and) cold dew."*

(See also No. 82 supra)

## October

87. *"Ice in OCTOBER to bear a duck,  
Rest of winter is as wet as muck."*

or a November variant,

*"When the ice before Martlemas (11 November) bears a duck,  
Then look for a winter of mire and muck."*

88. *"October wind and rain."*

89. *"Much rain in October,  
Much wind in December."*

90. *"A warm October  
A cold February."*

91. *"For every fog in October,  
A snow in winter."*

(Heavy or light, according to the density of the fog).

92. *"If there is snow and frost in October,  
January will be mild."*

93. *"If there is thunder in October,  
January will be wet."*

94. *"October always has twenty-one fine days!"*

95. *"On SS. Simon and Jude's day (28 October)  
Gales begin, St. Luke's summer is ended."*

28 October was traditionally the first day of winter.

(For St. Luke's summer, see "The Year and its seasons" section).

96. *"If ducks do slide at Hallowtide,  
At Christmas they will swim,  
If ducks do swim at Hallowtide,  
At Christmas they will slide."*

Hallowe'en (31 October) was the last day of the Celtic (pagan) year. It was the night spirits of the dead were supposed to appear and witches were astir. All Hallows, now better known as All Saints, is celebrated on 1 November.

## November

97. *"A cold NOVEMBER  
A warm Christmas (or winter)."*



98. *"Ice in November brings mud in December."*
99. *"If there be ice in November to bear a duck,  
There'll be nothing after but sludge and muck."*

An alternative last line is

*"The rest of the winter'll be slush and muck."*

(For other variants see No. 87)

100. *"All Saints' summer lasts three hours, three days or three months."*
101. *"St. Clement (23 November) gives the winter."*
102. *"As St. Catharine's (25 November) fair or foul,  
So it will be next Februar."*

**December** (see also No. 18).

103. *"A green Christmas means a fat churchyard."*

OR

*" . . . . . makes a fat churchyard."*

*"A green Christmas brings a heavy harvest." (Rutland)*

104. *"If the sun shines through the apple trees on Christmas day,  
When autumn comes, they will a load of fruit display."*

OR

*"If snow covers the apple trees at Christmas, the next autumn  
will see a bumper crop."*

105. *"If ice bears before Christmas,  
It won't bear a goose after."*
106. *"Look at the weathercock on St. Thomas's day (21 December) at noon,  
to see which direction the wind will remain for the next three months."*
107. *"As cold as Christmas" or "Cold enough for Christmas"*

A reminder of the traditional concept of the Victorian "White Christmas". Snow at Christmas in this area is now rare, although an intense frosty period can occur on either side of Christmas Day.

During the last quarter of the nineteenth century snow fell on at least one day over the Christmas period one year in four.

108.

*"If on New Year's eve the wind blows south,  
It betokeneth warmth and growth;  
If west, much milk and fish in the sea,  
If north, cold and storms there will be;  
If west, the trees will bear much fruit,  
If north-east, then flee it, man and beast."*

*After the blizzard in  
late January 1940.*



## THE YEAR and its SEASONS

**Snow and Frost** (see also Nos. 173 and 174).

109.

*"A Year of Snow,  
A year of plenty."*

Sometimes expressed as *"A snow year is a rich year."*

110.

*"Easter in snow, Christmas in mud,  
Christmas in mud, Easter in snow."*

111.

*"Snow hanging in ditches and along hedges is waiting for more."*

OR

*"There'll be more to fetch it away."*

112.

*"Black frost, long frost,"  
Hoar frost three days, then rain."*

The second line also stands alone as *"Three white frosts (some say, two) will be followed by a black one."*

## Seasons

113. "A good winter brings a good summer."

114. "Winter thunder, summer hunger."

115. "Thunder in spring,  
Cold will bring."

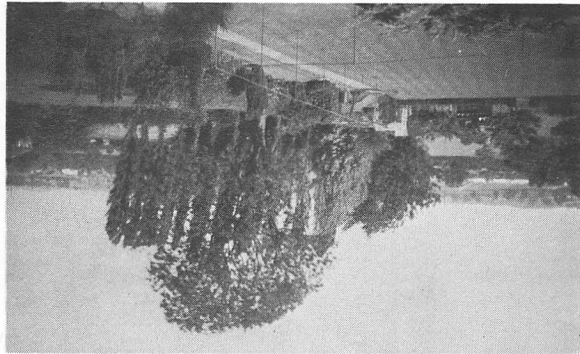
116. "As the days grow longer,  
So the cold grows stronger."

117. "A late spring never deceives."

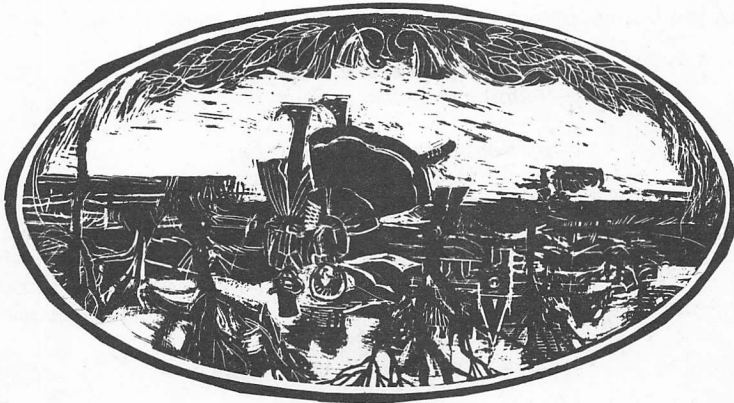
118. "When the blackthorn's out, the cold will persist."

A warm period in late March or early April brings the blackthorn into bloom, and is often followed by a prolonged cold period, "Blackthorn winter."

High summer,  
August 1952.



Vignette of "Winter"



119.

*"Make hay while the sun shines."*

Although this saying has wide currency as an English proverb, suggesting "Do not waste opportunities", its original weather sense was significant. Due to our changeable climate, though it may be sunny to-day, it may rain tomorrow. It is important therefore not to put off until tomorrow what you can do to-day!

120.

*"If on the tree the leaves still hold,  
The coming winter will be cold."*

121.

*"Plenty of berries in autumn,  
Mean a severe winter."*

Not true of holly berries, which normally portend a mild winter, but may be true of haws.

The abundance or lack of berries has more to do with past weather than future.

122.

*"St. Martin's summer" refers to a late spell of warm, calm weather around Martinmas (11 November) and is to be compared with "St. Luke's summer", a warm, settled period around 18 October, often referred to as an Indian Summer.*



*Vignette of "Autumn"*

**WIND** (see also No. 108).

*"No weather be ill  
If the wind be still."*

123.

*"The North wind doth blow  
And we shall have snow."*

124.

*"When the wind's in the east,  
'Tis fit for neither man nor beast."*

Some prefer *"North-east."*



125. *"When the wind's in the west,  
The weather's always best."*

Some say, *"at its best."*

126. *"A southerly wind and a cloudy sky proclaimeth a hunting morning."*

127. *"When the wind's in the south,  
The rain's in its mouth."*

128. *"When the wind's in the east,  
The fishes bite least.  
When the wind's in the north,  
The fishes won't come forth.  
When the wind's in the south,  
It blows the bait in the fishes' mouth."*

129. *"When the wind's in the east on Candlemas Day (2 February)  
There it will stick to the second of May."*

130. *"If the wind's in the east on (of) Easter Dee (Day),  
You'll have plenty of grass, but little good hee (hay)."*

The first line can read *"Rain on Good Friday and Easter Day."*

131. *"If the wind is in the north on Lady Day (25 March),  
It will remain in that quarter until Midsummer Day (24 June)."*

132. *"Where the wind is on Martinmas Eve (10 November)  
There it'll remain till Candlemas (2 February)."*

Some versions say, in the second line,

*"There'll it be for the rest of the winter."*

Other alternatives state that if the wind is south-west at Martinmas, it will remain in that quarter until after Candlemas, with mild weather predominating. If the wind is in the north on Martinmas, it will not shift till Christmas. If the wind is in the north-west at Martinmas, there'll be a severe winter to come.

133. *"A veering wind, fair weather,  
A backing wind, foul weather."*

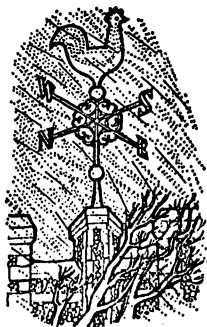
134. (Barometer) *"First rise after low  
Foretells stronger blow."*

The barometer falls as much for wind as for rain, though the two often go together. In winter, high or steady pressure often signifies frost and/or fog, in calm conditions.

135. (Barometer)

*"Long notice, long past,  
Short notice, soon past."*

Also reflected in the saying *"The sharper the blow, the sooner 'tis past."*



## MOON and STARS

136. *"The moon and the weather may change together,  
But change of the moon does not change the weather."*

137. *"Clear moon,  
Frost soon."*

138. *"Saturday change and Sunday full,  
Never did good and never will."*

139. *"Full moon in October without frost,  
No frost till full moon in November."*

140. *"Pale moon doth rain,  
Red moon doth blow."  
White moon doth neither rain nor snow."*

141. *"If the moon show a silver shield,  
Be not afraid to reap your field.  
But if she rides haloed round,  
Soon you'll read on deluged ground."*

142. *"The moon with a circle brings water in her beak."*

Haloed are usually associated with cirrostratus clouds heralding the arrival of a warm front, which will bring rain within twenty-four to thirty-six hours.

143. *"When the ring round the moon is far, rain is soon."  
When the ring round the moon is near, rain is far away."*

A simpler rendering is

*"Near ring, far rain,  
Far ring, near rain."*

**144.** *"Stars appear clearest in a frosty sky."*

This is true of clear, cloudless winter nights, but in summer clear night sky can mean rain to come.

**145.** *"When the stars begin to huddle,  
The earth will soon become a puddle."*

The second line can read

*"The earth will very soon be a puddle."*

## LOCAL TOPOGRAPHY

**146.** *"When Bardon Hill has a cap,  
Hay and grass will suffer for that."*

**147.** *"When Bever wears a cap,  
Ye churls of the valley look to that."*

**148.** *"When mist doth rise from Belvoir Hole,  
O, thou be sure the weather's foul."*

## GRASS and TREES

**149.** *"When the dew is on the grass,  
Rain will never come to pass."*

Sometimes expressed as *"Heavy dew indicates fair weather."*

**150.** *"If the grass be dry at morning light,  
Look (out) for rain before the night."*

**151.** *"If the oak's before the ash,  
Then 'll you'll only get a splash,  
But if the ash's before the oak,  
Then you may expect a soak."*

The oak is almost always in leaf before the ash in the Midlands.

**152.** *"Oak before ash means a fine harvest,  
Ash before oak, harvest wet."*



Rook

## SOME SIGNS ASSOCIATED WITH NATURE

153. *"Hark I hear the asses bray,  
We shall have some rain to-day."  
(Rutland).*
154. *"If the cock goes crowing to bed,  
He'll certainly rise with a watery head."*
155. *"Cows lying down in the morning or standing with their backs to  
the wind mean rain within a few hours."*
156. *"Pigs can see wind."*
- Impending gales may cause pigs to throw straw about with their snouts!
157. *Barking dogs, cats sneezing, washing behind their ears or  
generally restless, may indicate weather change.*
158. *"Swallows high, staying dry,  
Swallows low,  
Wet 'twill blow."*
159. *"Blackbirds singing from treetops signify a fine day."*
160. *Rooks building their nests high means good weather, but when they  
feed in the streets, storms are imminent.*
161. *The woodpecker's laughing call is heard and owls are noisy before rain.*
162. *Bats flying low at dusk portend a fine day on the morrow.*
163. *"When the bees crowd out of their hive,  
The weather makes it good to be alive."*
164. *"When the bees crowd into their hives again,  
'Tis a sign of thunder and rain."*



165. *Fish come to the surface when rain is imminent.*
166. *Spiders spin long webs for hot, dry weather, but are more evident inside houses before rain.*
167. *Cones open for good, dry weather and close for bad.*
168. *Gossamer floating over fields and hedges in the early morning means fine weather.*
169. *Onions are supposed to grow thick skins when a hard winter is promised.*
170. *The scarlet pimpernel is sometimes referred to as "the poor man's barometer", as the red flowers open for sunny weather, and close for rain.*

## MISCELLANY

171. *Fires burn brightly and fiercely before and during frosty clear weather.*
172. *"Cold enough for snow."*

or conversely,

173. *"Too cold for snow."*

Snow generally falls with the temperature at or just above freezing point.

174. *"The floods are out."*

This expression, found elsewhere in the Midlands, is a small piece of local dialect. Other parts of the country would say *"The floods are up"* or *"The floods are coming up."*

175. "Rheumatics" and corns are traditionally a fair guide to coming weather changes. The following two examples are probably obsolete:

*"Old sinners have all points  
O'th'compass in their bones and joints."*

*"A coming storm our shooting corns presage,  
Our aches will throb, our hollow tooth will rage."*

## BUCHAN'S PERIODS

In recent years, interest in Buchan's Cold Periods has increased. Alexander Buchan

(1829-1907), secretary of the Scottish Meteorological Society, formulated six cold and two warm recurrent periods after many years' observations from Ben Nevis observatory. It is therefore important to remember that conditions in Scotland may bear little resemblance to the climate of the Midlands.

His cold periods were:

7 to 10 February  
11 to 14 April  
9 to 14 May  
29 June to 4 July  
6 to 11 August  
6 to 12 November

His warm periods were:

12 to 15 July  
12 to 15 August

Local observations suggest that overall the success rate is barely 50%.

### **POST SCRIPTUM**

***"To talk of the weather is nothing but folly,  
When it rains on the hill the sun shines in the valley."***

***"The weather will always repay its debt."***