

# Weather



Bill Giles

## WEIRD OR WHAT?

Bill Giles reviews the weather experienced over Britain's latest version of summer and predicts that we may not have seen the last of it.

It has been a rather disappointing summer as far as golf is concerned, and it was certainly one in which the weather forecast played a very important part.

The forecasts for the summer months of June, July and August, which I issued in early May, went for a summer which would be remembered for the bad parts rather than the prolonged warm sunshine.

Ideal weather for sports is very similar to ideal farming weather in that everyone wants something different depending on what activity they are taking part in. The golfer, obviously, wants fine, if not sunny weather, though obviously not too hot, to play in. There should be a cooling breeze, but not too strong, unless you happen to play links golf in which case you are probably used to the conditions and have a distinct advantage over those who don't.

On the other hand, those administering the game, and especially those greenkeepers who make the game possible, want something different. In prolonged drought you can always irrigate, but it is so much better if nature does it for you - especially at night so as not to interfere with playing the game during the day. But if the rain comes down in short very heavy bursts, as it did this year, then all you end up with is run-off and flooding which can force the course to be closed with the consequent loss in player enjoyment and revenue.

So what about this summer for the United Kingdom? Well, as I have already said, very much a mixed bag. In many respects Scotland fared worst with some very heavy and damaging downpours, which played havoc, shutting some courses for days on end.

June in Scotland brought a lot of southwesterly winds in from the Atlantic, which gave copious amounts of rain in the south where many places had up to twice the normal June rainfall. At Eskdalemuir, in the central lowlands, the wet May was followed by a wet June making it the wettest May/June for 64 years since 1938.

During the month the southwesterly winds predominated, giving a lot of heavy showers to the south and west of Scotland. In fact, parts of southwest Scotland, including Glasgow, only had four days in June when it didn't rain. The north and East of Scotland were much better off and, in the shelter of the Highlands, only had the normal amount of rainfall for June. Because of the cloud and rain, June was a very dull month in the south, in

fact the dullest since 1966. In contrast, Lerwick in Shetland, was drier than normal with 130% of the monthly sunshine average.

July continued in the same vein, with the showery weather lasting into the middle of the month, but then drier and more settled weather spread across the west and south of Scotland, although there was still a lot of cloud. The last week of July saw a battle between the hot, humid weather over England and the cooler regime in Scotland. This produced some torrential rain over northeast Scotland with the Moray Firth having their wettest July day on record on the 30th, giving widespread flooding. Fife Ness reported nearly two and a half inches of rain (60 millimetres).

August was a better month across Scotland but there was a legacy of dull wet weather at the beginning, which caused great concern to many clubs.

For England and Wales, June was really nothing out of the ordinary. There was a good deal of dry weather and with the average of 57 millimetres, just over two inches, the month was, if anything, drier than average. But there were some exceptions. These came in the form of thunderstorms, which to the golfer are no use whatsoever, and to the greenkeeper a frustrating waste of water.

On the 4th and 5th of June, heavy thunderstorms brought nearly two inches of rain to parts of southeast England and East Anglia, and these heavy showers lasted through to the 11th. In the storms it was very windy with a gust of wind of over 60 miles per hour reported near Swansea on the 10 June.

The third week of June saw further thundery rain, this time starting in the north of England, but which also broke out in the southeast too, as temperatures soared to 29 degrees Celsius or 84 Fahrenheit. The fourth week of the month wasn't too bad from the rainfall point of view, though there were some heavy downpours over Snowdonia and the Lake District.

It was the month of July that caused chaos on some courses with the







overall average over England and Wales up to 92 millimetres - nearly four inches - or some 50% above normal. The first twelve days of July were terrible especially in central and southern parts of England. Heavy thundery showers were a daily occurrence. These are notoriously difficult to forecast for any one spot as they are very hit or miss, and made for a very wet period, flooding out some courses but missing others altogether.

The third week in July brought a respite from the downpours although it still wasn't wonderful golfing weather and on the 19th and 20th a small depression brought an inch of rain to parts of the Midlands. Following this there was a severe hailstorm at Santon Downham on the 20th and further thundery showers in the east of England. Down in the far southwest of England, on the 25th, there was a lot of hill and coastal fog making play very difficult or impossible on some courses near the sea.

It became very hot in the last week of June, setting off a few thunderstorms and west London reached 33 degrees Celsius - that's over 90 degrees Fahrenheit - on the 29th. And remember that is in the shade.

Northern Ireland had a thoroughly miserable summer with a dull wet June followed by much the same in July. August wasn't quite so bad.

The first couple of weeks of June saw some pleasantly sunny days but the general rule was for cool and, at times, very showery weather. On 13th June, many places across the Province had at least one inch of rain.

The third week was generally unsettled with thunderstorms.

Much of July continued in the same vein with sunny spells and showers dominating the weather on most days with little in the way of prolonged dry warmer weather.

The past year's weather is a reflection of the likelihood of things to come, in that although we do expect more rainfall in wintertime and less in summer, the summer rains will become increasingly thundery with heavy downpours and consequent flooding.



### MANAGING WEATHER FOR GOLF

Increasingly, at all levels of business, the decision making process needs to have access to the latest information. The overriding proposition is to produce the best product at the most cost effective price.

Managing golf clubs requires a delicate balance of producing the best possible playing conditions, whilst allowing members and visitors to play at times when it would be better for the course if it were closed.

Greenkeepers have to make decisions involving substantial amounts of money, and which are dependant to a large extent on the weather. It is only right that they have access to the most up to date and accurate information available to them.

In collaboration with BIGGA, Weather Index Ltd has developed a number of weather packages that are specifically designed to aid club Secretaries and Greenkeepers, and priced so as to be affordable to all. Forecasts at the clubs latitude and longitude are delivered daily by email, together with planning indices and vital information such as frost warnings.

Many clubs keep weather records throughout the year, especially for rainfall and temperature. Included in the packages, Weather Index will produce a written report on the previous months conditions and compare them with past records. Your club can submit its data and be included in the monthly summaries, to enable you to build up an invaluable reference library of weather statistics.

The company will also issue regular articles on what to look for in weather patterns and how to interpret the skies.

The aim of the weather packages is to provide a complete weather service, the aim being to enable those responsible for course management to have the best available information on which to make planning decisions.

For further information contact: Bill Giles, Weather Index Ltd,  
Bucklersbury House, 83 Cannon Street London EC4N 8ST  
Tel: 020 7653 3232; Fax 020 7653 3239  
Email: [bill@wpindex.com](mailto:bill@wpindex.com)