



Met Office



Archive

National Meteorological Library and Archive
Factsheet 12 — National Meteorological Archive

The National Meteorological Library and Archive

Open to everyone

The library was first mentioned in the 1870 Annual Report of the Meteorological Office.

In 1914 the archive was established as the official custodian of meteorological related records. It holds historic weather records on behalf of the nation and is an approved place of deposit under the Public Records Act.

The National Meteorological Library and Archive is a National Archive (TNA) Accredited Service.

The National Meteorological Library and Archive are open by appointment.

All of the images used in this fact sheet along with many others covering all aspects of meteorology can be obtained from the National Meteorological Library and Archive. For further information including our opening times please visit our web page at <https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/research/library-and-archive> or email: metlib@metoffice.gov.uk

The other factsheets in this series are available to view at the following web page <https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/research/library-and-archive/publications/factsheets>

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Introduction

The National Meteorological Archive is the UK's official archive for meteorological records. It is one of the many services provided by the Met Office. The Archive is home to one of the most comprehensive collections on meteorology anywhere in the world and provides a major resource for scientific and historical research.

Our aim is to support the Met Office and the wider meteorological community by providing a targeted, proactive and flexible information service; our primary role is to preserve the public memory of the weather and to conserve the records in our care.



Fig. 1. The public search room where customers can view material.



Fig. 2. Where the records are securely kept in environmentally controlled strong rooms.

Brief history

At a meeting of the Meteorological Committee on 29 April 1914, the Met Office first officially accepted responsibility for custodianship of appropriate public weather records.

Between the end of the First World War and the 1950s the Met Office experienced considerable expansion.

The various records it produced were stored in a haphazard manner at various locations in London, Dunstable and Harrow, with different divisions within the Office having responsibility for different records.

Fig. 3. Met Office Record Store in 1950s at Dunstable.



However, in 1955 the then Director General, Sir Graham Sutton, stated that Bracknell, with a population of no more than 25,000 people, would be an ideal location for the new centralised headquarters, and it was hoped that the Archive would also be brought under centralised control in one fixed location thereby making it easier for our customers.

The 1958 Public Record Act made the Lord Chancellor responsible for the selection and preservation of important records and in a letter dated 3 May 1962 he stated his willingness for the Met Office at Bracknell to be designated as the official national Place of Deposit for meteorological records.

In 1989, the decision was taken to relocate the Archive to a new site at the Stirling Centre in Bracknell and accordingly the National Meteorological Archive moved to its new home in October 1991. Further, with the historic relocation of the Met Office to Exeter in 2003, the National Meteorological Archive followed some 18 months later and opened to the public at Great Moor House in March 2005 – a building we share with the Devon Record Office.



Fig. 4. Great Moor House entrance on Sowton Industrial Estate, where the Met Office Archive is based.

[Explore the collections](#)

As the UK's approved place of deposit for weather records we are legally entrusted to hold technical records created by the Met Office for England and Wales and some overseas stations; we also store records on behalf of the Royal Meteorological Society. Please note that meteorological records for Scotland are held in Edinburgh and meteorological records for Northern Ireland are held in the Public Records Office in Belfast. See the contacts page for full details.

Our expansive and diverse collections therefore comprise an outstanding historical, scientific and cultural resource of international scope. Whether you're a climate researcher, a teacher, a family history enthusiast, or you simply want to browse our collections for personal interest, you're sure to feel inspired by the material we hold.

The following information should help you to identify which types of records will best suit your particular needs .

Synoptic charts

We have a vast collection of weather charts ranging from those which focus on daily conditions directly over the British Isles to North Atlantic and southern hemisphere charts that show weather patterns over a large area. All these charts were drawn and plotted by forecasters during the normal course of business as new charts needed to be made for each set of new observations. Quite often there were as many as four charts drawn per day and they run from May 1867 until August 2003 – which means that we have a lot of charts!

The first weather charts sought to depict the weather conditions around the British coastline. The initial impulse for their production was in response to a violent storm in October 1859 that caused the loss of the ship the Royal Charter and 459 lives.

By 1861 Admiral Robert FitzRoy, the founder of the Met Office, had established a network of 15 coastal stations from which gale warnings could be provided, thus began the national shipping forecast. The development of the electric telegraph in the 1870s and the further expansion of the observational network enabled faster dissemination of warnings and meant more comprehensive synoptic analyses could be created.

Fig. 5. Admiral Robert FitzRoy founder of the Met Office in 1854.



Between the end of the nineteenth century and the outbreak of the Second World War the Met Office expanded a great deal in terms of the breadth and scope of its activities and firmly established itself as one of the world's leading authorities on the weather. Indeed, by this stage our forecasting played a vital role in the success of major military offensives – most famously during the Normandy landings on 6 June 1944. The actual D-Day chart is available to view here at the archive.



Fig. 6. Taking recordings from a Stevenson's Screen during the Second World War.



Fig. 7. Plotting weather chart by hand at Dunstable in the 1940s.

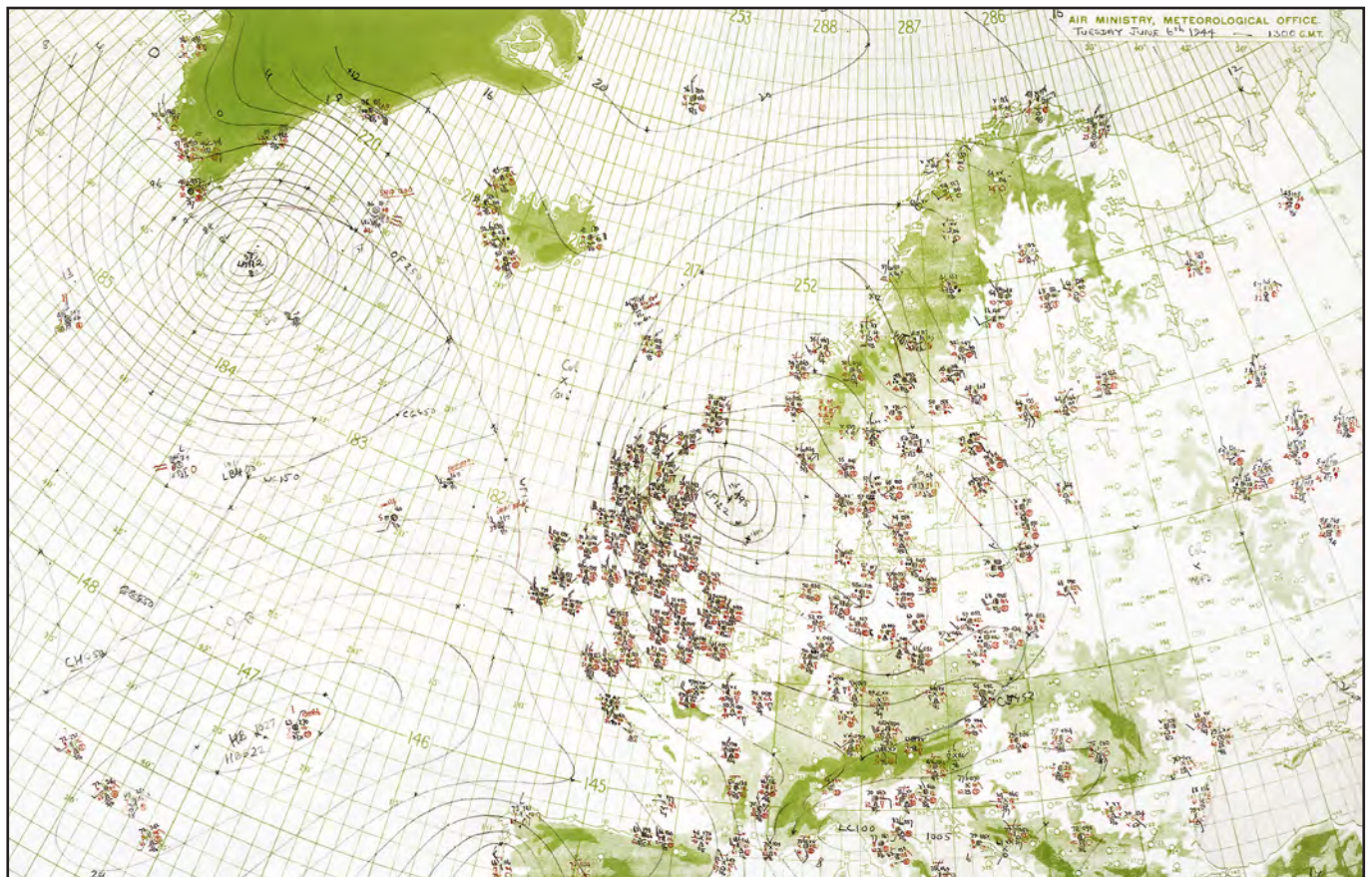


Fig. 8. This is a working chart for 1300 GMT on 6 June 1944, plotted in the Central Forecasting Office at Dunstable. At this time airborne troops were landing in Normandy with no weather problems. A cold front which gave driving rain on the 4 June and which would have prevented effective air support of a seaborne landing in Normandy on 5 June, has by now moved well away to the south-east.

These charts can be of real interest if you want to discover what the weather was like on the day you or one of your ancestors were born. If you would like a personalised birthday chart please get in touch.

Today, charts are produced by computer covering the weather across the entire world, but in terms of style and content they remain essentially the same as the very earliest weather maps. Most charts are stored in their original paper format although from August 2003 weather charts produced by the Met Office are stored electronically.

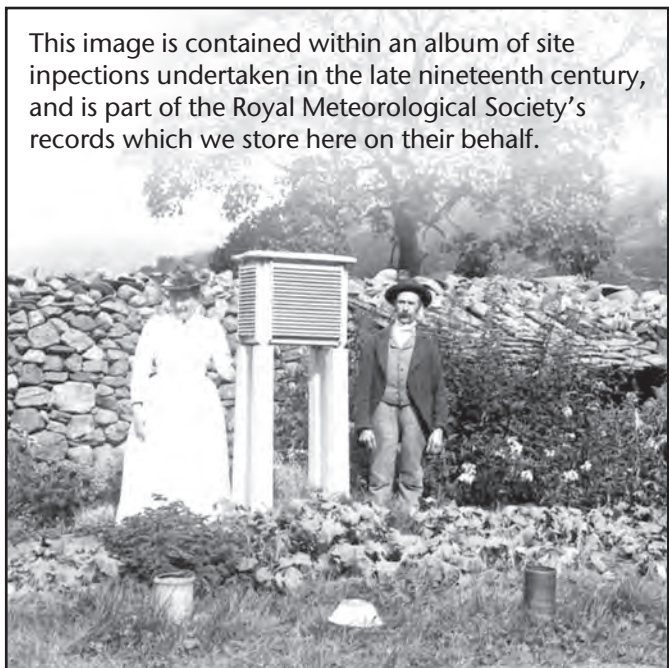
Climate returns

Throughout the UK there is a network of official climate stations at which regular daily observations are made. These stations are on average located just 40 km apart from each other thus ensuring that the weather typically associated with low pressure and frontal systems are recorded. The numerous records produced by these observations are stored here at the archive in paper format from the late nineteenth century right up to 2006 and they offer a tremendous resource for research. Most records typically include the following weather elements:

- Air temperature at 1.25 m above the ground
- Air temperature over a grass surface or its artificial equivalent
- Air temperature over a concrete surface
- Soil temperature at 0.1 m, 0.3 m and 1.0 m below the ground level
- Relative humidity at 1.25 m above the ground
- Amount of rainfall
- Depth of lying snow

- Mean wind speed, mean wind direction and maximum gust at 10 m above the ground
- Atmospheric pressure at the station level and reduced to mean sea level
- Surface barometric pressure
- Visibility
- Amount and type of cloud
- Height of cloud base
- Duration of sunshine
- Descriptive weather diary

Fig. 9. Seathwaite observing station Lancashire, 28 August 1893 (note the Stevenson screen and rainfall gauges in the foreground).



This image is contained within an album of site inspections undertaken in the late nineteenth century, and is part of the Royal Meteorological Society's records which we store here on their behalf.

Daily weather reports

These consist of daily summaries of general weather conditions. We have a continuous series of them featuring Britain's weather since 1 January 1869 to the present, and have a good many featuring different parts of the world too. The amount of information within these reports increased over time and later versions often include: simplified daily synoptic charts of Europe and the North Atlantic Ocean; a weather forecast for the next 24 hours; and a more detailed daily synoptic chart of the British Isles. These are very useful when composing birthday charts and can also be used to aid family history research – perhaps you would like to know what the weather was like on a key date in the life of one of your ancestors or for an important date in history.

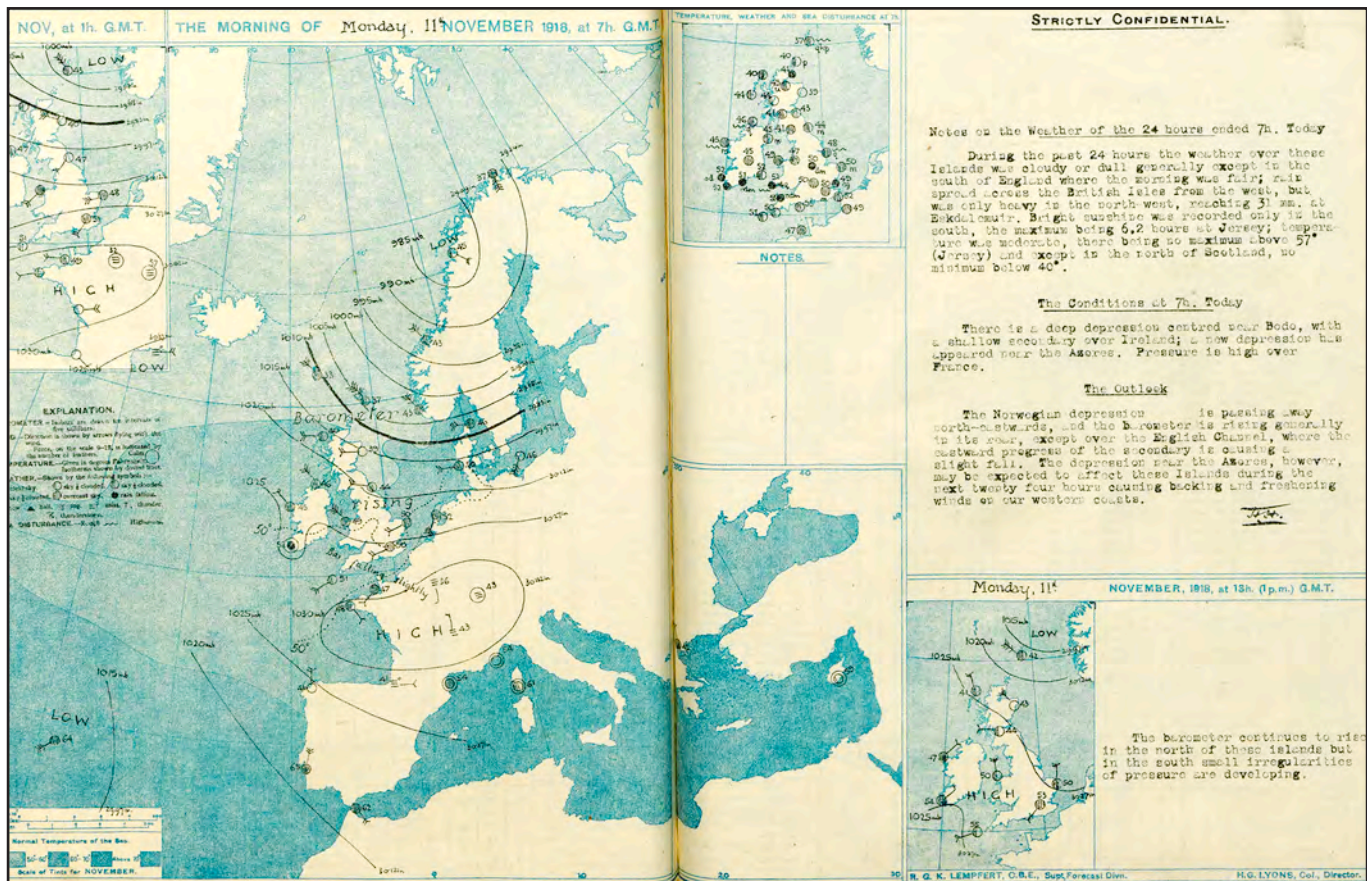


Fig. 10. UK Daily Weather Report, Armistice Day, 11 November 1918.

An offshoot of the daily weather report was the monthly and annual weather summaries, which began in 1884 and 1903 respectively. Though their content and layout has changed over the years both generally consist of standard weather elements outlined by text, tabulated data and climatological diagrams, and aim to give a general impression of the distribution of the weather across the UK.

Ship logs

The weather has always played an important role in marine navigation – especially in the days of sailing ships. The sixteenth century saw a vast expansion in the number of long distance voyages to exotic lands and such epic voyages necessitated uniform procedures in weather observing practices, which accordingly generated many paper records.

By the late seventeenth century knowledge of weather at sea had advanced to such an extent that on the basis of that accumulated knowledge the English mathematician and astronomer Edmund Halley was able to produce one of the most valuable contributions to the newly emerging science of meteorology, namely the effect of ocean currents on global trade winds.



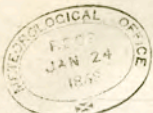
Fig. 11. Edmund Halley, map of global ocean currents and trade winds, 1686.

This paper provided a detailed description of surface winds over the Atlantic Ocean, Indian Ocean, and North Pacific Ocean. Few papers have made such a singular contribution to meteorology as this, in which Halley correctly recognised that thermal contrasts between land and sea are fundamental in the shaping of atmospheric circulation patterns on the scale of trade winds and monsoons.

Our collection is composed of many thousands of worldwide records from Merchant and Royal Navy ships which typically date from the mid nineteenth to the late twentieth century.

We even hold logs made on board certain historic voyages such as HMS Beagle, on which Darwin once sailed with Captain FitzRoy to the Galápagos Islands in 1837; and HMS Erebus which undertook several daring voyages to Antarctica ultimately ending in tragedy as the ship became icebound and all its crew perished.

*Showing the pressure of the Atmosphere for every Hour during 2 Days
between 55° 0 and 65° 0 South Latitude
On Board Her Majesty's Ship, Erebus
James C. Ross Esq. R.N. Captain*



Date	Position	AM											PM												
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11		
15 th	56° 16' 130° 30'	29.625	29.604	29.577	29.547	29.533	29.529	29.510	29.501	29.478	29.469	29.477	29.467	29.461	29.461	29.468	29.468	29.462	29.452	29.445	29.448	29.444	29.438	29.434	
16 th	56° 20' 148° 5'	380	366	345	327	325	339	345	327	322	308	308	306	304	306	304	296	294	297	303	310	331	331	336	334
15 th	57° 6' 147° 40'	335	337	337	341	350	360	362	361	370	385	391	381	376	403	389	395	404	404	385	440	405	408	415	417
16 th	58° 36' 146° 43'	410	410	431	443	444	454	467	481	475	493	496	498	491	481	499	498	509	508	494	505	515	518	545	563
17 th	61° 3' 146° 3'	586	564	570	609	611	622	641	628	642	687	702	689	708	713	712	694	711	735	738	756	768	768	777	797
18 th	62° 50' 147° 26'	798	818	825	834	848	855	868	857	873	889	890	880	902	883	900	896	902	894	904	923	927	935	965	974
19 th	63° 23' 147° 56'	957	963	969	973	966	963	960	954	970	982	988	961	977	979	979	965	952	962	952	963	963	941	948	957
20 th	63° 47' 151° 34'	963	953	953	950	939	937	940	910	928	929	924	906	908	905	894	871	869	872	862	845	846	838	841	84
21 th	64° 40' 153° 24'	833	822	813	811	808	800	786	785	790	792	804	797	783	793	778	780	785	785	794	795	755	766	798	802
Sums		5867	5837	5831	5835	5874	5859	5865	5806	5848	5854	5890	5873	5871	5826	5803	5849	5858	5877	5830	5815	5803	5841	5893	6169
Mean	29.654	29.657	29.648	29.647	29.647	29.657	29.657	29.647	29.657	29.647	29.657	29.647	29.657	29.647	29.657	29.647	29.657	29.647	29.657	29.647	29.657	29.647	29.657	29.647	29.657

Fig. 12. HMS Erebus, Ship Meteorological Log, Captain James. C. Ross, December 1841.

Ships meteorological logs performed a vital role in early twentieth century forecasting. In 1907 an arrangement was made between the Met Office and the Admiralty that all weather reports received from HM Ships when cruising in the Atlantic would be sent to the Met Office for the purposes of forecasting UK weather. This proved to be an epoch making decision in the history of synoptic meteorology for it ended the hitherto scarce amount of data available from the very area from which most UK weather originated. The advent of wireless telegraphy at this time also meant that observations of high accuracy could be taken and transmitted to London with immense speed.

This arrangement was still further cemented after the First World War and from that point onwards the Met Office was seldom without reliable reports from the Atlantic, which proved invaluable in the preparation of accurate daily forecasts. In recent years, these once working logs have provided a rich source of historical weather data for modern climate and oceanographic research.

Sunshine cards

For a great many years the instrument for measuring sunshine duration was the Campbell-Stokes sunshine recorder. The original instrument (helimeter) was invented by John Francis Campbell in 1853, but the later card-holding version was developed by Sir George Stokes in 1879.

A glass sphere focuses the sun's direct radiation on a graduated card and the length of the burn trace on the card corresponds to the duration and intensity of sunshine at a given location.

The resulting cards are stored here at the archive and can be used to help build a climate profile of an area and have also been used to provide information to the tourist industry.



Fig. 13. Campbell-Stokes sunshine recorder.

Daily registers

These contain hourly weather observations made at continuously manned stations such as airfields, harbour authorities and coastguard stations. We have these for approximately 1,000 sites for the UK and overseas, from the 1920s to more recent times. They include observations of temperature, wind speed and direction, visibility, cloud amount and type, pressure and dew point, rainfall, snow and sunshine.

The amount and frequency of the recorded data makes them a rich source of information for people who need the weather conditions at specific places and for very specific times. For example, they can prove particularly useful when investigating plane crashes during the Second World War.

Private weather diaries

For weather data which predates the founding of the Met Office in 1854 we have to rely on weather diaries compiled by private individuals who had a keen interest in the weather in their locality.

Though the geographical coverage can be uneven and the variety and quality of elements observed differs widely, because they predate the official observing network, many were composed by brilliant men of science who became key individuals in the history of meteorology such as Luke Howard – who devised a method of classifying cloud types still used today – and Admiral Beaufort, in which he first wrote down his scale for estimating the force of the wind and his shorthand notation for describing the general weather conditions. A version of the Beaufort wind scale is still used today in the shipping forecast on BBC radio.

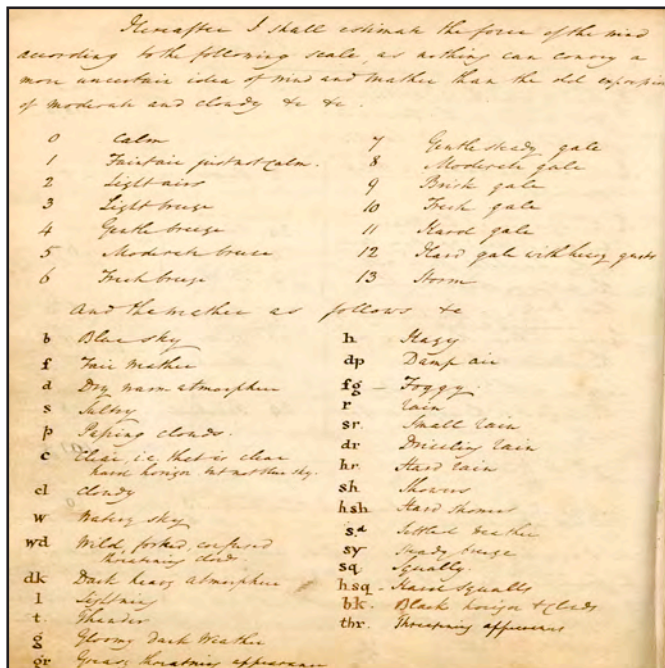


Fig. 14. Extract from Admiral Sir Francis Beaufort's weather diary in which he first wrote down his scale of wind force, January 1806.

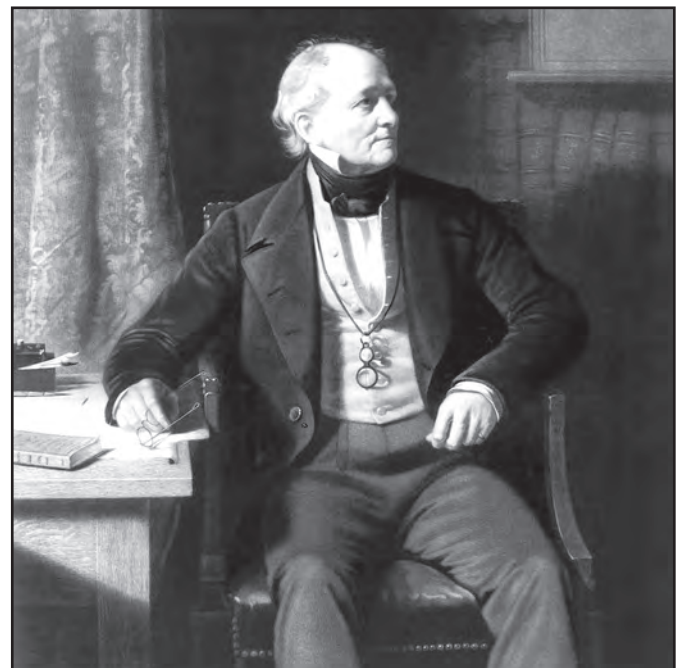


Fig. 15. Admiral Sir Francis Beaufort.

The earliest diaries we have date from the early eighteenth century and are mostly UK based, but we do have occasional overseas diaries some of which have recently provided valuable weather data for parts of the world that we would not otherwise have data for and have therefore been useful when constructing computer models essential for understanding and predicting future extreme weather events such as El Niño and La Niña.

Regardless of their association with famous individuals and apart from the data they contain, these diaries also possess an intrinsic value as historic artefacts by virtue of their antiquity and uniqueness; they're also impressive documents to look at because are often lavishly illustrated.



Fig. 16. Private diary for Thwaite, Suffolk, compiled by Orlando Whistlecraft, 1827.

Rainfall cards

Measurements of rainfall amount often vary greatly from location to location because of the variable nature of rain producing weather systems and their interaction with high ground. For this reason a high density network of rain gauges is required to define accurately the rainfall climatology of the UK and to identify where flooding events are likely to occur as a result of local heavy storms.

Consequently in the archive we have a great many rainfall cards usually consisting daily, weekly and monthly totals sourced from both professional and amateur stations throughout England and Wales. Observers typically used a traditional 5 inch rain gauge which had a sharp brass or steel rim of diameter 5 inches (127 mm), sited 30 cm above ground level with a funnel that collects rain in a narrow necked bottle placed in a removable can.



Fig. 17. Traditional 5-inch rain gauge.

REGISTER OF RAINFALL IN 1878

Kept at *Middlesbrough* in the County of *York* by *J. P. Hutton*

Latitude Diameter *5 inches*

Time of Observation Height of Receiver above Ground *2 feet*

Longitude Rain Gauge Sta Level *21 feet*

CONCISE INSTRUCTIONS.—Fix the gauge firmly, with its centre level and 1 ft. above the ground, quite clear of trees and walls, empty it daily at 9 a.m. and enter it against the preceding day. Snow should be melted slowly in a closed vessel and the amount melted in rain, an "s" being prefixed. With a low temperature and high wind, it is sometimes blown out of the funnel; then take one-tenth of the average depth of snow, and enter that as the yield of water—e.g., 3 inches snow = "2 of rain. When there is no rain, a line should be drawn, rather than cyphers inserted.

Date	Jan.		Feb.		March.		April.		May.		June.		July.		Aug.		Sept.		Oct.		Nov.		Dec.		Date
	in.	th.	in.	th.	in.	th.	in.	th.	in.	th.	in.	th.	in.	th.	in.	th.	in.	th.	in.	th.	in.	th.	in.	th.	
1	0.00	0.00	0.16	0.38	1.00	1.10	6.00	0.40	0.20	0.09	0.25	0.29	1												
2	0.85	0.00	0.00	0.29	0.40	0.88	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2												
3	0.13	0.00	0.00	0.12	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.60	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	3												
4	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.07	0.00	0.26	0.00	0.06	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.01	4												
5	0.08	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.10	0.00	0.13	0.00	0.00	0.02	0.15	5												
6	0.01	0.00	0.07	0.00	0.04	0.01	0.00	0.16	0.00	0.26	0.10	0.06	6												
7	0.11	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.11	0.05	0.00	0.00	0.37	0.50	7												
8	0.09	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.15	0.00	0.10	0.00	0.00	0.58	0.52	8												
9	0.00	0.00	0.14	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.12	0.04	0.22	9												
10	0.05	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.04	0.00	0.02	1.03	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.26	10												
11	0.02	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.02	0.72	0.00	0.02	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	11												
12	0.00	0.05	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.74	0.00	0.00	0.85	0.00	0.00	0.00	12												
13	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.02	0.04	0.01	0.00	0.40	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.00	13												
14	0.00	0.18	0.00	0.00	0.07	0.00	0.00	0.83	0.00	0.00	0.85	0.00	14												
15	0.17	0.03	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.07	0.00	0.00	1.57	0.00	15												
16	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.17	0.02	0.16	0.00	0.09	0.32	0.00	0.71	0.00	16												
17	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.12	0.06	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.11	0.32	17												
18	0.06	0.00	0.00	0.10	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	18												

Kept by Mr. J. J. STANLEY, of 48, Cannon Street, London, N.W., for insertion in his annual which now contains returns from about 2,000 stations, and from all the leading observatories.

Fig. 18. Rainfall return for Middlesbrough, 1878.

Our earliest rainfall records date from the 1870s and the values were generally produced on annual sheets until 1963 after which time monthly cards were used.

The responsibility for water management and flood forecasting lies with the Environment Agency in England and Wales and with the Scottish Environment Protection Agency, organisations that operate and fund many of the rainfall stations. Please note that some of the more recent cards may be subject to access restrictions owing to the Data Protection Act 1998.

Rare books

Held on behalf of the Royal Meteorological Society, we have a great many rare books in which all aspects of meteorology are represented by some of the greatest names in science, from the earliest times – to the foundation of the Met Office in the mid nineteenth century – and beyond.

Philosophers and theologians have for many centuries been fascinated by the weather – indeed its origins as a science are found in ancient Greece. Aristotle’s treatise ‘Meteorologica’ is the earliest known written work on atmospheric phenomena and we have a handsome sixteenth century copy of this foundational work available to view here in our archive.

Fig. 19. Page from Aristotle’s Meteorologica, 1505.



The medieval period also produced many important works by such pioneering minds as Roger Bacon and, most notably, Albertus Magnus. He was a German monk who wrote extensively on a wide range of topics including botany, astronomy, physics, biology and geography; but his most profound and original insights came in the field of logic and meteorology. We have a hand-written parchment copy of his book in our archive dating from 1282 making it the oldest item in our entire collection.

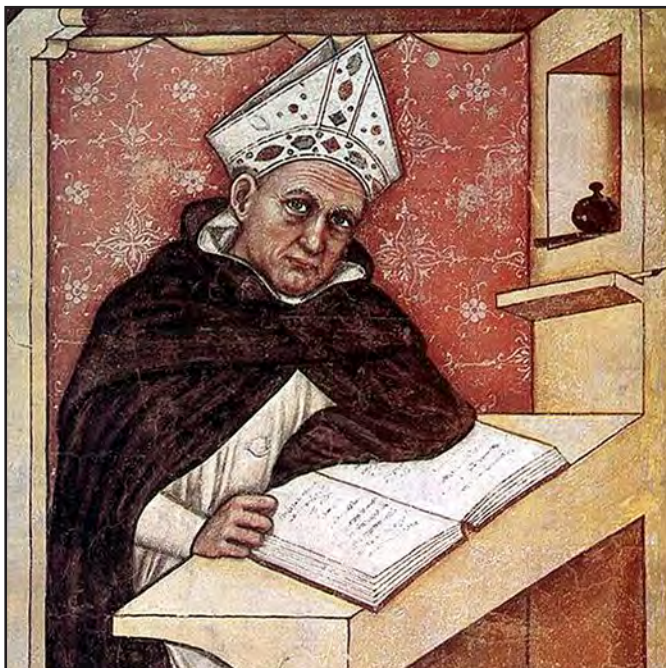


Fig. 20. Albertus Magnus.

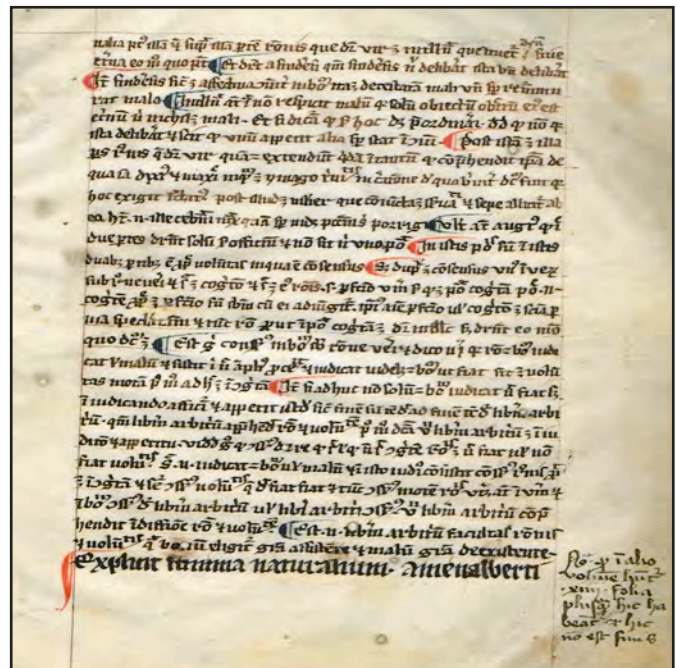


Fig. 21. Page from Albertus Magnus’s book De Negotio Naturali written in Latin.

The impact of this work and others from the Middle Ages played an important role in shaping a general attitude of mind that eventually produced the Renaissance – a period of sustained progress in artistic and scientific endeavour that transformed the view of our place in the universe and our ability to understand the world around us.

However, significant developments in our knowledge of meteorological phenomena did not really occur until the seventeenth century, which was in part due to the extreme weather conditions experienced at the time – the ‘mini-Ice Age’ – but was also symptomatic of a more general trend towards major scientific advancement, now known as the Scientific Revolution. Such advances were made a good deal easier by the invention of instrumentation allowing for a greater degree of accuracy when making observations. It thus marks the dawn of modern approaches to science and is a change reflected in our collection.

Fig. 22. Early experiment with thermometer, from Dalence’s *Traitez des Barometres*, 1688, available to view here in our rare book collection. This is the earliest account dealing exclusively with the subject, and is especially valuable as the first work laying down rules for the gradation of the thermometer.



Further developments took place in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries leading to the foundation of the Met Office in 1854. This long pattern of technological development and sustained epistemological advancement is reflected in the rare books we store in our archive. Our collections of rare books have wider historical application therefore in so far as they lend insight into the society in which they were produced. All are welcome to come and view the very material upon which the edifice of our modern sophisticated meteorology is built.

Station history files

These mainly consist of inspection reports from each climate station with details of instruments used and a diagrammatic representation of the observation site layout. They can also include maps of the station’s exact location, various administrative correspondences, and even occasional photographs. These files can be used if a station ever moved geographical position or changed its name at some time in its history. They can also be helpful in explaining a set of anomalous data figures in our records – perhaps there was a problem with the site or the instrumentation type was changed, all of which would have been recorded in the official inspection report. So they can prove invaluable when determining the accuracy and validity of the data produced at a particular site.



Fig. 23. This is a photograph of the climate station at Towyn, West Wales included in the station history inspection report, 1905.

Autographic records

We have a number of autographic records which were used to record temperature (thermogram), rainfall intensity (hyetogram), air pressure (barogram), relative humidity (hygogram), and wind speed and direction (anemogram).

Though the instruments used for creating them did vary, each normally included a cylindrical drum on which was mounted graphic paper. This drum rotated slowly making a single revolution once per day, per week or sometimes per month, and on which the actual weather information is marked by continuous pen trace.

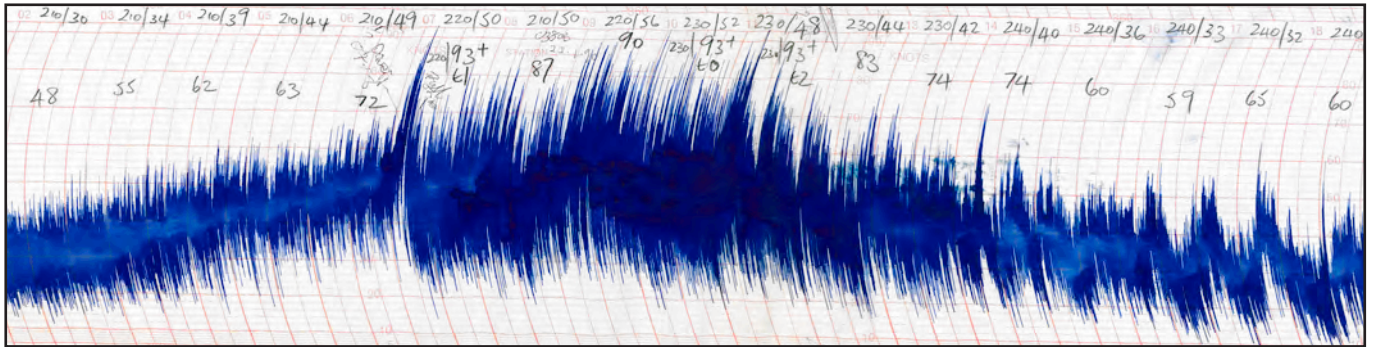


Fig. 24. Image of anemograph wind trace for the Burns Day Storm, 25 January 1990, at Gwennap Head, Cornwall. Wind speed is normally measured by a cup anemometer consisting of three or four cups, conical or hemispherical in shape, mounted symmetrically about a vertical spindle.

The wind blowing into the cups causes the spindle to rotate. In standard instruments the design of the cups is such that the rate of rotation is proportional to the speed of the wind.

Nowadays, mechanical recording autographic instruments have been superseded by electronic weather instruments that use computer methods to record these separate weather elements. The digitally recorded data is sent to the Met Office automatically and then immediately fed into the sophisticated computer models.

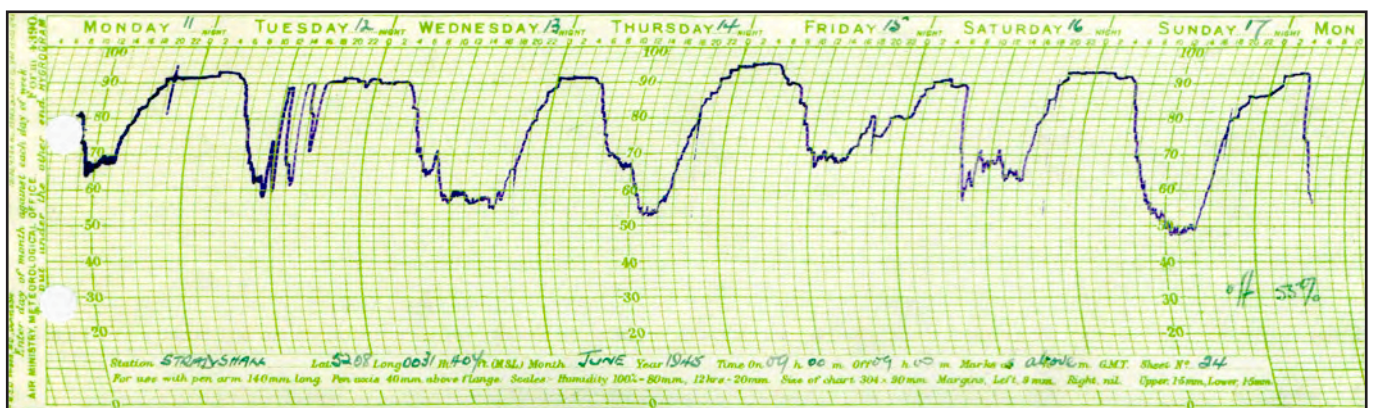


Fig 25. Example of a hygogram trace indicating the actual relative humidity recorded continuously at Stradishall observing station, Suffolk, in June 1945.

Other records

We also have numerous other types of important and historic items in our collection including: upper air data from radiosonde and pilot-balloon ascents; weather records of Scott's Antarctic expedition from 1911; newspaper cuttings featuring the human impact of severe weather events; proceedings and reports from international meteorological conferences; historic meteorological instruments and related artefacts; glass-plate slides and other historic images depicting every aspect of meteorology.



Fig. 26. International Meteorological Conference, Munich 1891. This and others like it, forms part of the historic images collection.



Fig. 27. Thames frozen in 1683. This and others like it, forms part of the historic images collection.



Fig. 28. Tree damaged by 'whirlwind' in Fulford, York, Saturday 8 March 1890. This and others like it, forms part of the historic images collection.

Frequently Asked Questions

What are your opening hours?

We are open from Tuesday to Friday 10.00 to 17.00 . We do not open on Saturdays.

Please note that we normally close for a short time over the Christmas and New Year period, we also usually close to customers for a two week period in February for stocktaking and other essential collection management duties.

Where is the archive based?

Meteorological records for England and Wales are based in Great Moor House on Sowton Industrial Estate in Exeter. The building belongs to Devon County Council and we share archive facilities with Devon Record Office. It is a large building, located not far from the main Met Office building (ten minute walk), near the Park and Ride bus stop.

Do I have to book before I visit?

Yes. Advance booking is essential. This is so that we can provide you with the best service possible by getting material ready for you before you arrive. Our contact details can be found at the end of this fact sheet. For data requests we will need to know about the geographical location you're interested in along with the date range, weather elements and data resolution you need.

Do I have to pay for access?

No. All items are free to view in the archive. Electronic meteorological data can also be provided free of charge up to the limits as defined in the current Met Office Charging Policy. Customers needing large quantities of electronic data for their research can submit a request for this data to our Customer Centre but charges do apply which vary depending on the amount of data requested (Tel: 0870 900 0100 Email: enquiries@metoffice.gov.uk).

Do I have to register with you?

Yes. All customers on the occasion of their first visit to the Archive must register as an official user of the search room with Devon Record Office, for which you must provide proof of identity. Naturally, personal details are protected and not passed on to third parties. For a full list of search room rules and regulations please see the Devon Record Office website.

Do your facilities provide for disabled customers?

Yes. Our search room and its facilities is fully compliant with the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. We have wheelchair access, including ramps and lifts; we also have the shared use of a sight magnification reader machine to help partially sighted customers use our records. So that we can do our best to help you make the most of your visit, please let us know in advance if you require additional support because of visual or hearing impairments.

Are there any refreshment facilities?

Yes. There is a small refreshment room just outside the main archive search room, with a coffee and snack machine; public access computers are also available. For cooked meals there are privately run eating establishments nearby. Please note that eating and drinking are strictly not permitted in the search room.

Can I take coats and bags into the search room?

No. Coats and bags must be kept in lockers provided, for which you will need a £1 coin to operate which is returned to you at the end of your visit. Clear plastic bags are available in reception.

Can I use a laptop in the search room?

Yes. You are more than welcome to use a laptop computer in our search room. There is a power supply located beneath the desks and Wi-Fi internet access is also available. For customers without their own computers, we do have several public access PCs available to use. To activate one of our public access PCs you must first request a booking by staff at reception. Normal bookings are allocated for 60 minutes, but providing it's not busy you are welcome to request an extension.

Can I use a digital camera?

Yes. You are welcome to take pictures of the records for free, however, this is subject to the agreement of the Archive staff, who will take into account the physical state of the material and any copyright restrictions which may apply. We also request that you leave the flash turned off so as not to disturb other customers in the search room. If you intend to take a great many pictures then we do have a camera stand available to help you with this.

Are the shelves open access like in a library?

No. Only authorised staff can enter the environmentally controlled strong rooms where all our records are securely stored. This is why we insist on customers pre-booking before their visit to cut down on document retrieval times. However, if while working in the search room you decide to view additional records to those you originally requested then please ask one of the members of staff. We will do our best to locate the records you need in as short a time as possible.

Can I borrow archive material?

No. Owing to the unique and valuable nature of the material we hold, all items stored in the archive are for reference use only and cannot be borrowed or removed from the archive under any circumstances. The search room is supervised by staff at all times and CCTV is also in operation.

Do you provide photocopying or scanning facilities?

Yes. We can undertake some scanning and photocopying on your behalf albeit within reasonable practical limits and subject to the discretion of the Archive staff. A full list of copying options and corresponding charges can be found on our website.

Are there any copyright or data protection restrictions?

Yes. While most of the information we hold is Crown Copyright, we do store some material in our archive on behalf of other people or organisations. If what you require is for research or private study for non-commercial purposes, you will be asked to sign a copyright declaration form.

If it is for research or private study for commercial purposes you will need to pay a copyright fee for each item you copy. Please consult our website for more details. Occasionally records may have certain access restrictions if they date from the 1960s to recent times as they may include the names and personal addresses of observers. Archive staff will advise customers when such restrictions apply.

How do I access the meteorological records for Scotland and Northern Ireland?

Meteorological records for Scotland are held in Saughton House in Edinburgh and records for Northern Ireland are stored in the Public Record Office in Belfast. Should you wish to gain access to this data or view records in person, please submit a request by email or telephone using the contact details found at the end of this fact sheet.

National Meteorological Library and Archive

Met Office FitzRoy Road, Exeter, Devon, EX1 3PB, United Kingdom.

 enquiries@metoffice.gov.uk

 www.metoffice.gov.uk