

WOODTHORPE GAZETTE

THE BI-MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE FRIENDS OF WOODTHORPE GRANGE PARK
SUMMER 2018 SPECIAL EDITION



Can you remember when as children part of our summer reading was always taken up with the special summer editions of all our favourite comics. The bumper editions of the Beano, Dandy or Topper always seemed to appear on the news stands at the same time as schools around the country were breaking up for the annual summer holidays.

To emulate those special editions of yesteryear I have put together our own special summer edition of the Woodthorpe Gazette with just one theme in mind to talk about the hot weather we are experiencing this year.

So where ever you are this summer, whether it is sitting in the shade in your garden or even enjoying and ice cream from Woodthorpe Park's café I hope you enjoy what is written.

Summertime and the Living is Easy!

Summertime and the Living is Easy, the song from George Gershwin's Porgy and Bess is the one tune that usually springs to mind when weather warms up and the sun shines for a prolonged period of time. Another song of summer that comes to mind is Bobby Goldsboro's 'Summer The First Time.' A languid summer love song that was released in 1976, with the opening lyrics:

It was a hot afternoon

Last day of June

And the sun was a demon

The clouds were afraid

One ten in the shade

And the pavement was steaming.

Along with so many others titles, these are just two examples of tunes that seem to capture the dreamy images and sensations that come to mind just as soon as the weather warms up for any prolonged period of time, along with the thought that summer has finally arrived.

With the warm summer we are enjoying this year it is hard to imagine, as we swelter in temperatures nudging 30 degrees Celsius that 2018 began with a prolonged winter, aptly entitled 'The Beast from the East.' When temperatures dipped well below minus 1, and Woodthorpe Park was transformed into a

resemblance of the snowy landscapes of Siberia and with cold winds coming straight from the Urals!

Of course, once the Beast from the East began to thaw we then had the Pest from the West when it just rained, and rained, and rained again! If you recall, because of all the rainfall we had Woodthorpe Park had for a time its own ornamental lake, which was christened 'Lake Woodthorpe.'



The Beast from the East

When I took the above photograph and others similar it was so cold my fingers went numb just depressing the shutter on my camera!



The Pest From the West

When the above photograph was first published Woodthorpe Park was slowly sinking to periscope depth which prompted me to make the candid prediction of: 'I bet there will be a drought this summer!' All I can say is, many a true word spoken in jest!

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As you can see by the above image, what was once a water-logged area surrounded by glutinous cloying mud, this has now been transformed into an arid dry cracked surface of diminishing greenery crying out for a drop of rain!

Am I complaining about the weather? of course not. It is just at the time of writing, the weather to date has been so warm that for the past two weeks, apart from three occasions, all I have worn is shorts. It is just that I am old enough to remember the glorious summer of 1976 that according to today's generation of meteorologists is still the benchmark that more recent summers, or should I say hot spells, are judged by.

For those who were not around, the summer of 1976 was special as it followed a warm summer of 1975, which was followed by a dry winter when very little rain fell. Then from the beginning of May 1976 to almost the end of August the sun barely went behind the clouds.

For example, Heathrow Airport recorded 16 consecutive days of temperatures of over 30 °C (86 °F) from 23rd June to 8th July and for 15 consecutive days from the 23rd June to 7th July temperatures reached 32.2 °C (90 °F) in London and the South-East of England. A further five days saw temperatures exceed 35 °C (95 °F). On 28th June, temperatures reached 35.6 °C (96.1 °F) in Southampton, the highest June temperature ever recorded in the UK. The hottest day of all was on the 3rd July, with temperatures reaching 35.9 °C (96.6 °F) in Cheltenham.

As a consequence of all the hot and dry conditions, devastating heath and forest fires broke out in parts of Southern England. 50,000 trees were destroyed at Hurn Forest in Dorset. Arable farming also badly hit with £500 million worth of crops failing. As a consequence, food prices increased by an average of 12 per cent.

It was also a summer when reservoirs began to empty. For example, Haweswater reservoir in the Lake District had only 10 per cent of its water left and

people were able to walk on its bed, which at the height of the drought was 60 feet below its normal water level, and for those living in the south-east of the UK standpipes began appearing on street corners.

As water became an ever more precious commodity, church congregations began praying for rain and at the summer's height the government at the time appointed Denis Howell MP as Minister for Drought.



A familiar scene of 1976 a reservoir with very little water.



Queuing for water rekindled the return of the 'Dunkirk Spirit.'



Standby your Pipes: Minister for Drought Denis Howell meets with members of the public whose domestic water supplies have been cut off and are now having to use communal standpipes.

Finally, in August, just a few weeks after the appointment of Denis Howell MP as Minister of Drought severe thunderstorms brought rain to some

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places for the first time in weeks and September and October 1976 were both very wet months, which brought an end the drought of 1975–1976.

As comparisons are being drawn between this summer and the summer of 1976, I have to say Woodthorpe Park is beginning to resemble that prolonged hot summer of 42 years ago. For example, what was until a few weeks ago an area of lush green grass is now turning brown, and in parts of the park what was at the beginning of the year a soggy morass of glutinous mud is now a dust bowl of dry gritty earth.



Patches of parched brown grass.



A dust bowl of dry gritty earth, when not so long ago it was a soggy morass of glutinous mud.



The question therefore to ask is how are you coping with all this hot weather? Are you one of those who say the hotter the better, or are you one that just grumbles because it's too hot?

I for one find that with long hot spells like the one we are experiencing; my body adjusts to the weather. Instead of wearing a mixture of winter and summer clothing, as the summer months yoyo's its way through good and bad weather, I can wear clothing more suitable to warm weather for longer periods or until the temperature begins to cool down to what meteorologists refer to as 'the seasonal norm!'

The next question to ask therefore is, when out walking do you walk out with the sun beating down on you, or do you seek the shade? I for one choose both.

There are parts of Woodthorpe Park when you have no choice but to walk out when the sun is beating down, and there are areas where you can walk which affords a more suitable temperature for those who find hot weather oppressive. Being the one who chooses both, when I find the heat too oppressive for my liking I often walk under the canopy of trees that follows the pathway leading to Woodthorpe Grange.



The canopy of trees that leads to Woodthorpe Grange. A mixture of elm, sycamore, beech and horse chestnut trees.

Having lived all my life facing Woodthorpe Park there are a number trees that line the footpath that, as a child, I used to climb – providing there were no park keepers in the vicinity! However, there is a tree that is still around today that was once climbable.

This is a tree that was once climbed by many generations of young lads and in some cases girls. However, on this tree it was quite common for those who climbed it to carve their names into the bark and today these can still be seen. However there are two names that are still readable many decades later as they were immortalised in white paint. The names belong to two young lads by the names of 'Wez and Bren.'

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When I pass that old tree I often look up at their names and think to myself who were those two lads? What became of them, and what are they doing now? As those two lads who originally climbed the tree were a little older than myself, they will now be in their 60s and may even be retired. In other words, whatever became of Wez and Bren?



What became of Wez and Bren and all the others whose names are immortalised on the bark of the once climbable beech tree?

So what will this year's summer be remembered for? Will the summer of 1976 still be the one to beat or will it be for a younger generation the summer to remember? Already there are statistics available for the month of June which makes for interesting reading. For example:

- The first week of June became increasingly settled, with temperatures rising well above average especially by day in northern and western areas.
- The provisional UK mean temperature was 14.8 °C, which is 1.8 °C above the 1981-2010 long-term average, making it provisionally the third warmest June in a series from 1910.
- Rainfall was 48% of average, and most notably well below average over most of England and Wales with less than 10% of average in some southern counties: for England it was provisionally the third driest June in a series from 1910. Sunshine was 142% of average, and with the exceptions of a few eastern and southern coastal locations sunshine was well above average nationwide, especially in northern and western areas; it was provisionally the fifth sunniest June in a series from 1929.
- A maximum temperature of 33.0 °C was recorded at Porthmadog (Gwynedd) on the 28th. A minimum temperature of -1.0 °C was recorded at Altnaharra (Sutherland) on the 6th. In the 24 hours ending at 0900 GMT on the 14th, 44.6 mm of rain fell at Achnagart (Ross & Cromarty). A wind gust of 64 knots (74 mph) was recorded at Orlock Head (County Down) on the 14th.

At the time of writing, in the coolness of the morning air I am looking out of my study window and seeing another cloudless sky, which heralds yet another warm sunny day. However I cannot help but wonder how it will all end? Will it end like the summer of 1976 when September and October became two of the wettest months on record? Or will it end like it did 46 years ago during the summer of 1972 when hailstones, the size of marbles, poured down on Nottingham, causing severe flooding when boats had to be used to rescue people trapped in cars; and when the wall to the kitchen gardens on Woodthorpe Park collapsed due to the sheer volume of water that had built up behind it.



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1972: Residents in the Radford area of Nottingham clearing away the giant hailstones, which were as much as three feet deep.



2013: Due to a heavy rain water cascades down Sherwood Vale, thus bring a temporary halt to summer!



2013: Following heavy rain a temporary stream flows down past the residents of Sherwood Vale's gardens that lead on to Woodthorpe Park.

The photographs from 1972 and 2013 are examples of how summers can be brought to a temporary halt. However, every cloud has a silver lining. Once the storm has past the sun eventually manages to peep through the clouds, as often as not if it is still raining when the sun is shining, this heralds a spectrum of colour in the form of a rainbow, as the photograph below demonstrates.



In conclusion I have to say, this obsession with the weather is something that is terribly English. 'It is true that the English always hope for a White Christmas or a Summer Scorcher and worry about a Bank-Holiday Wash-Out or a Big Freeze. Weather warrants capital letters. It has status in everyday life. But the obsession is not just with the big picture; it is about the minutiae of each day's conditions.

We secretly like the fact that our weather continually takes us by surprise, often several times in the course of one day. The changeability of the weather has been a source of marvel, anxiety and unfailing interest sine the year dot. In 1758 Samuel Johnson wrote an essay entitled 'Discourses on the Weather.' 'It is commonly observed,' he pointed out, 'that when two Englishmen meet, their first talk is of

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the weather; they are in haste to tell each other, what each must already know, that it is hot or cold, bright or cloudy, windy or calm...’ He went on to explain that

An Englishman’s notice of the weather is the natural consequence of changeable skies and uncertain seasons. In many parts of the world, wet weather and dry are regularly expected at certain periods; but in our island, every man goes to sleep, unable to guess whether he shall behold in the morning a bright or cloudy atmosphere, whether his rest shall be lulled by a shower or broken by tempest.

So, long before our national addiction to social-media alerts, breaking newflashes and live online updates, the English had the weather to spice up conversation on an almost minute-by-minute basis.’

Fogle B, 2017: English: A Story of Marmite, Queuing and the Weather. pp. 31, 32 Harper Collins, 1 London Bridge Street, London SE1 9GF



A Collage of Clouds and Stormy Weather



I cannot end this special edition of the Woodthorpe Gazette without mentioning the 2018 FIFA World Cup and in particular the England Football Team.

On previous showing, even before the competition had even started, people showed very little interest in the event and in particular the England Football Team.

I will be the first to admit I am no footballer, I can’t even play the game. However along with the weather the England Football Team have made this summer a summer to remember.

Although beaten in the semi-finals, they have certainly shown to the nation we have, at last, a team and a manager in Gareth Southgate we can all be proud of... WELL DONE!



Finally, in the words of John Ruskin

‘Sunshine is delicious, rain is refreshing, wind braces us up, snow is exhilarating; there is really no such thing as bad weather, only different kinds of good weather.’

Enjoy your Summer: ED