

But it's meant to be Summer

Over the years I have often heard the exasperated cry of *'But it's meant to be summer'*, which is normally used with a sense of annoyance and even anger.

And of course it's a cry that is always used during wet summer weekends and when your week's holiday in Bangor resembles late autumn and just like this year when the central heating went back on at the end of June.

What do people actually mean though when they say *'but it's meant to be summer'*?

Surely with the fickleness of the British weather most people must surely realise that expectation and reality rarely go hand in hand.

You could be lucky in that your week's holiday coincides with fine weather and you could boastfully claim: *"could have been on the beach every day"*, but is the reality a case of: *"we didn't let it stop us getting out and doing things"*?

The latter obviously failing to mention that a hat and coat was needed and no-one else was on the beach, not even to walk the dog! Because even the dog wouldn't go out in it!



However, if most weekends in summer and your week's holiday enjoyed decent days then that would probably do, but still most people would want a little bit more than that.

And what more might they want? For a start, plenty of sun, gentle breeze and 24-25°C (not too warm mind), yet some of us would happily take: sunny spells, ideally 21-22°C and a steady westerly.

If that 'ideal' temperature looks a little low, then it's because up here in Cumbria we don't like it too warm – we melt at 25°C!

The highest maximum in Cumbria being 33.3°C, recorded twice (July 1876 in Kendal and 20th July 1901 at Newton Rigg).

Some of us would happily forego June and most of July if we could ensure good weather during the six week school holidays and obviously for most, those six weeks are 'the Summer' - keeping children entertained is so much easier when the weather is set fair, they even entertain themselves!

But let's not forget that with the British the cry of "It's too hot" is never far away when we do get a warm spell and of course to ensure a good night's sleep it must not be too warm at night as well!

So how does the expectation (tinged with some good old British fickleness) match the reality?

In a somewhat understated way the Met' Office proclaim the following about the summer of 2017:

'This summer was rather wet, with rainfall above average for the UK in each individual month'.

They go on to add that it ranks as the ninth wettest summer in the UK in a series since 1910.

Possibly the dry spring had raised hopes that the summer might follow suit, but unless you lived in a few scattered spots of the West Midlands or near to Norwich, you would have experienced a wet summer.

However, over the UK as a whole it was slightly warmer than average, this being mainly due to a warm June.

From mid-July onwards the weather was often cool and under the influence of an unsettled westerly regime.

Consequently sunshine amounts were below average in western areas, with eastern areas near or above average.

That coolness from Mid July onwards is quite clearly demonstrated in Cumbria by the somewhat depressing fact that only one day in August attained 20°C. And it is equally depressing that in the summer as a whole, just twelve days attained 20°C, of which ten managed the old standard of 70°F (21.1°C), by far the lowest total yet recorded at my site.

So up here in Cumbria the view out of the window was often one of:



Brampton, NE Cumbria - Courtesy of Paul Crabtree

Here in Cumbria the final totals were quite uninspiring and at the Met' Office site at Newton Rigg (Penrith) rainfall totalled 303.6 mm with a mean temperature of 13.9°C.

In comparison to the 1981-2010 averages this represented 152.6% of summer rainfall and it was 0.3°C colder than average.

In a series back to 1900 this was the 12th wettest and in a complete series back to 1957, 30 have been warmer, 28 have been colder, with 2 having the same mean temperature.

As already mentioned, the lack of warm days was noticeable and whilst the mean minimum temperature was actually above average, the mean maximum temperature of 17.7°C was 0.9°C below average.

Sunshine totals in the county were generally below average in the south and east falling away to as low as 70% of average in the west and north.

As we all know the UK is often subject to an east-west split and the final figures for Lowestoft (Suffolk) go some way to demonstrate this.

With 177.2 mm of rain it may have had 112.4% of its average, but then each month recorded above average sunshine to end with 116.3% of average.

Each month was also warmer than average and as with the majority of the coastal areas of Norfolk and Suffolk, it finished 1.4°C above average.

However, as one owner of a tourist attraction told me this summer, if given the choice of a decent weekend, but with the weekdays being poor, they would take this every time as opposed to having a poor weekend and the weekdays being lovely.

As for the 13 weekends during the course of the summer here in Cumbria, seven would be described as 'reasonable to good', three would be classed as 'poor to bad' and the remaining three, which all came in August, as 'one good day, one bad day'.

So, overall for the weekends, not too bad.

Fairly typical, fairly average – but when it's meant to be summer, whoever utters those words is not thinking of ... average!