

EXTREMES OF WEATHER

All types of extreme weather can be found in Nottingham's history. The city's position on the River Trent exposes it to severe floods (notably those of 1795, 1852, 1875, 1932 and 1947), often linked to snow melt or unusually heavy or persistent rainfall.

"We have strange and dismal accounts from every part of the great damage done by the late flood, a very great quantity of cattle are lost and it is supposed one half of the bridges in the kingdom are either damaged or washed away" (Diary of William Gould, 23 February 1795, MS 736).



Photograph of the frozen River Trent at Trent Bridge, Nottingham, 16 February 1895. Manuscript Collections, MS 258/3/3.

Unusually cold or snowy winters were, and still are, noteworthy. Freezing scenes during the winters of 1838, 1895, 1947 and 1963 attracted the attention of diarists, journalists and photographers, whose records provide us with a valuable resource for the study of such events and their implications.

In the archives we can see people's responses to national weather events, such as the so-called 'big wind' of 6-7 January 1839 or the unusually hot and dry summer of 1826.

"7 January 1839 – A rough wind indeed blew. Some dreadful gusts of wind about 7 o'clock, our taproom chimney caught fire... We have heard of a great deal of damage done by the wind." (Diary of Elizabeth Nutt Harwood of Beeston, East Midlands Collection Not 33.V38 HAR).

"...All sun shine here and boiling hot, so long a drought has not long been remembered. From Ireland they have no hay, no potatoes, cattle die from want of water. I am much too great a philosopher to grumble in England too at sun shine. It is cheering to see it and I enjoy it..." (Letter from 2nd Viscount Sydney in London to John R. Townshend, 28-29 June 1826, THF/X/3/6/6/1-3).

By combining multiple accounts of such events, we can begin to understand how they were experienced by different people in different places.

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Making and breaking records in Nottinghamshire



The Nottinghamshire Guardian, 6 February 1960. Courtesy of Nottingham Post. Papers of HR Potter, HRP/F/1/3/1/3.



Derby Evening Telegraph van stuck in snow at Hartshorne, Derbyshire, February 1947. Courtesy of the Derby Telegraph. Trent River Authority Engineers Department Records, RE/DOP/H42/62.

Barbrook Reservoir, Owler Bar, Derbyshire, during drought, 1933. Collection of FH Brindley. Courtesy of Picture the Past.

