

# WRITING WEATHER

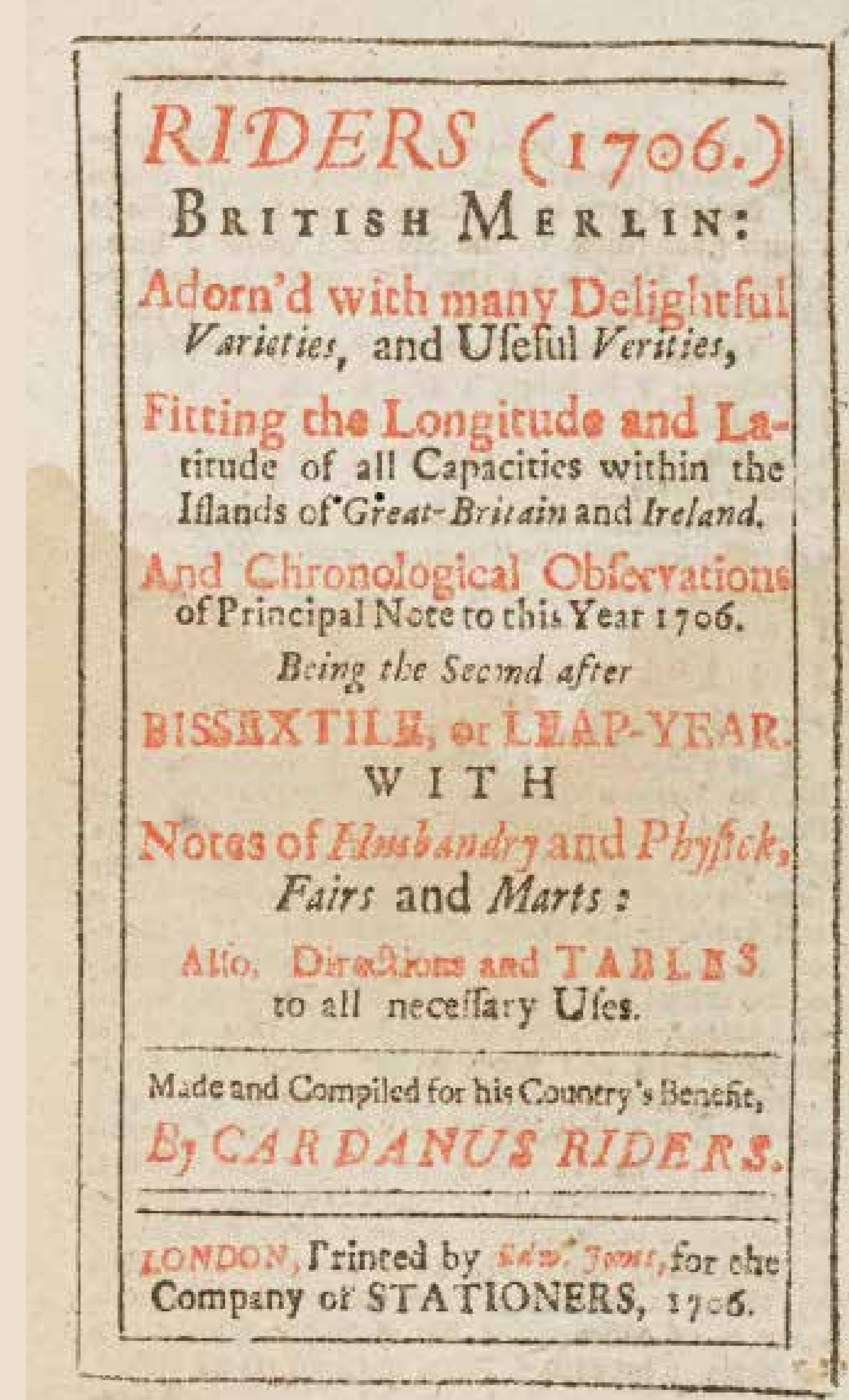
A wide variety of historical documents can be used to explore past weather events and their implications.

“My Lord Duke, The weather is now the all-engrossing matter. Knowing the deep interest your Grace takes in all that concerns the welfare and condition of your dependents I do not refrain from informing you of the state of the weather, about which so much anxiety is now felt by all classes of people, although it is very painful to write bad news week after week” (Letter from Henry Heming, Agent’s Office at Clumber Park, to the 5th Duke of Newcastle, 17 August 1860, Ne C 13804/1-2)



Early records tended to focus on ‘meteoric’ weather – the unusual or extreme event that disrupted everyday life at the local level. The planets, comets, appearances of the aurora borealis and eclipses were also believed to shape the weather, giving rise to so-called astrometeorological texts and almanacs.

From the mid to late eighteenth century, gentlemen scientists, doctors, surgeons, the clergy, amateur naturalists, university professors and travellers were among those who maintained weather diaries, collating daily local weather reports, and often supplementing their observations with readings from meteorological instruments “in a reassuring practice of repeated ritual” (Jan Golinski, *British Weather and the Climate of Enlightenment*, University of Chicago Press, 2007, p.98). An emergent professionalism in meteorology in the second half of the nineteenth century saw a shift towards more systematic meteorological investigation and observation using standardised meteorological instruments.



English printed almanac, *Riders* (1706) *British Merlin*. Portland (Literary) Collection, Pw V 117.

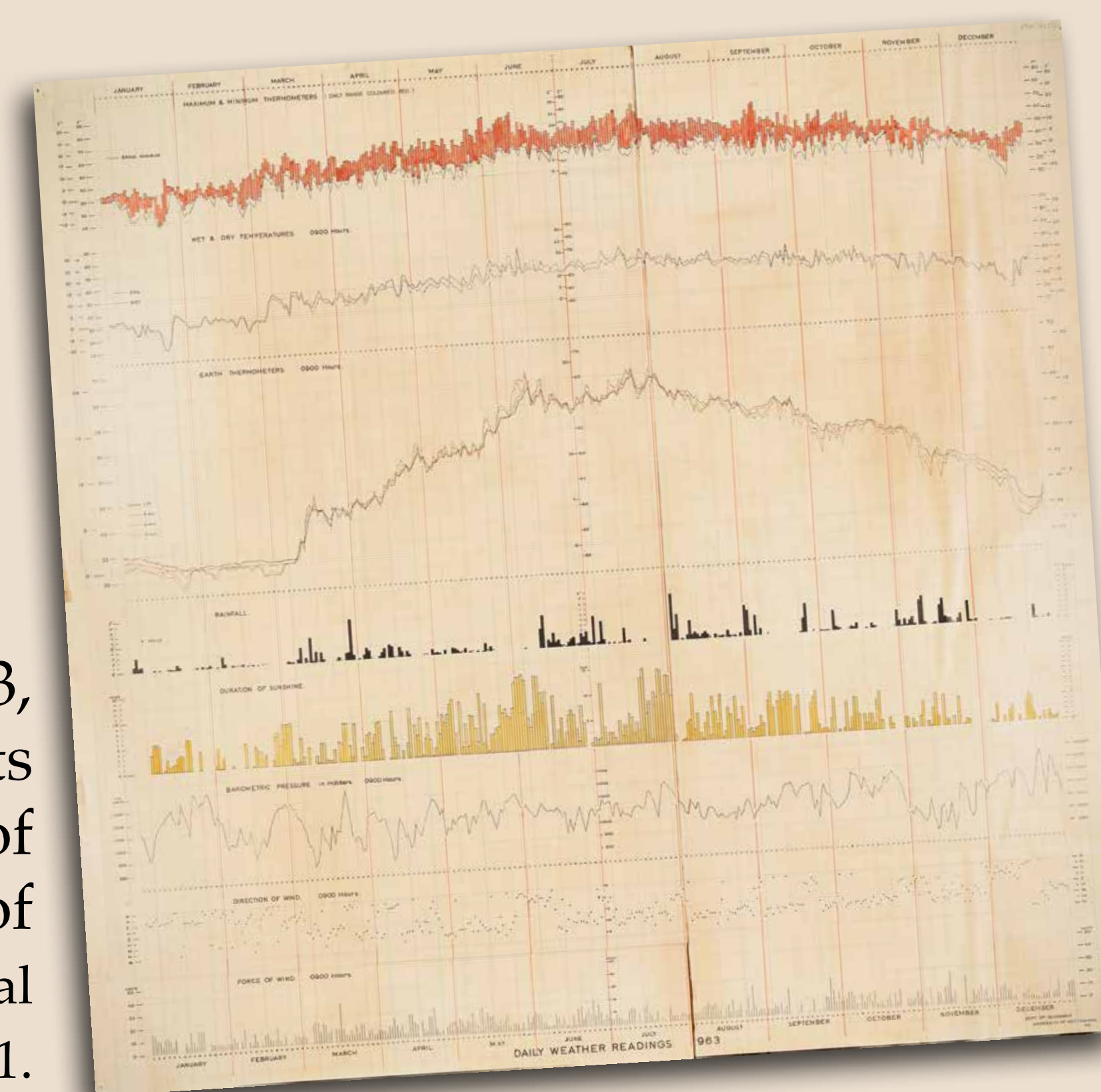
Weather is also recorded in newspaper reports, and is frequently referred to in diaries, correspondence, estate records, and legal documents. Indirect weather information can also be gleaned from crop and tax records, maps, paintings, gardeners’ records and photographs. All such materials represent important media through which the impacts of weather events are recorded and provide important evidence for a wide variety of historical climate and weather investigations.

## WEATHER EXTREMES

Making and breaking records in Nottinghamshire



Engraving of the appearance of a meteor, from Hayman Rooke, *A meteorological register kept at Mansfield Woodhouse in Nottinghamshire from the commencement of the year 1785 to the end of the year 1794*. East Midlands Special Collection Pamphlet Not 273.C42.



Weather chart for 1963, compiled by meteorologists from The University of Nottingham School of Geography. Meteorological Records, Met/Ug/13/1.

Recordings of weather at Chatsworth, Derbyshire, 1886. Wrench Collection, Wr D 31/49.