

MAY 2018

PREAMBLE



TREE OF THE MONTH 15/4 - 12/5 WILLOW [this is a grey willow]

Welcome to the May 2018 website entry. Winter 2018 is just beginning to leave us, and what a long hard winter it has been too – but 100% predicted.

Unfortunately this long hard winter has some long-lasting effects too; spring is now about a month late, in some areas maybe even later, which of course retards everything through the summer.

A long hard winter too, and costly in so many ways for the farmers and those that work the land, lamb mortality rates much higher in some regions from snow, in others from cold and wet. Here in the 'soft south of NW Kent,' it has been hard graft lambing this year, but despite the raw bitter cold, the rain, snow and winds, the flooding we survive – just!!

An acute shortage of hay and straw everywhere, with no June hay harvest in sight – August at best is the first hope of any hay harvest this year – after the depleted grain harvest, therefore hay and straw at an absolute premium – if you can find any!!

Winter wheat destroyed by the harsh winter has had to be ploughed in and broad beans replace that crop, therefore for sure, - even before a poor wet summer (more of that later) a shortage of grain crop looms.

21<sup>st</sup> April as I write this, cattle are still in the barns, the ground outside being far too wet to allow them out, soil temperature just starting to rise approaching 4C and maybe things starting to grow, but everywhere is so wet too which is a major problem.

Despite this most unseasonal very hot weather (which at this time of the year does more harm than good) – and with 29.5C here on the 19<sup>th</sup> maybe too one of the hottest days of 2018! Things are not all sweetness and light.

We have ‘the experts and soothsayers’ from the ‘London Bubble’ (The world revolves around London, the rest of us are ancillary - at best), telling us of a hot dry summer to come but an even harder winter to follow. So, as is my wont, I will use this column and 40 years experience to debunk all such notions.

The current heat, though not as hot, has been seen before, 2011, 2007, 1991 and 1987, in April. Sadly this heat in April also gave us really cold wet summers in those years too.. The clue lies with 1991; a winter in every respect similar to what we have just had (predicted too), followed by a warmer than normal April and then a wet cold summer – an omen for us all.

The cuckoo flower is the perfect indicator of the summer to come; when it flowers the cuckoo is 36 hours away. On Friday 6<sup>th</sup> we had a lovely dry sunny hot day and it flowered. It flowers to tell the reed warbler in whose nest it lays its egg – to prepare the nest. Stick with it please – it is not as stupid as it sounds. The cuckoo was heard here on the 8<sup>th</sup> – within this 36hour parameter. More importantly, whereas normally it would arrive the 17<sup>th</sup> it was here over a week early. When the cuckoo arrives early it departs early – why? This is nature again giving the 90 days notice of advance weather.

The normal departure time (as already predicted) beginning of July will be both wet and cold, therefore precious few insect food, the same for the last week of June (Buchan cold period too); and as many of those who have weddings on the 30<sup>th</sup> June have been told, I fear not the best of days either – and a wet Wimbledon fortnight too this year (it never rains but that it pours!). So the cuckoo will depart the 3<sup>rd</sup> week of June – before the real cold and wet.

However, ‘rain on Good Friday and Easter Day, - a good year for grass and a bad one for hay,’ = lot or rain = lot of grass = lot of milk= lots of cheese = wet year. A good silage year and a poor hay year as you can see the warning signs start to grow. It also rained on Low Sunday (8<sup>th</sup>) that gives 95% accuracy for the summer to come; it also rained on Pastor Sunday (15<sup>th</sup>) therefore a lot more rain to come. These signs keep coming, old they may be, but they are very accurate, months ahead too. Therefore the above alone dismiss any notions of hot dry summer 2018.

“The coming winter will be even harder than the winter just gone,” newspaper headlines from ‘experts.’ Nature prepares a year ahead – the skill is identifying this data, In 2017 nature gave the earliest and warmest spring, followed by an early summer and benign

autumn, plenty of fruit, grain and supplies for humans, seeds, hips haws and berries for birds and animals all done by September 2017; then followed this long hard winter. Nature prepared well and saw the problem.

If we are to have “an even colder winter to come,” then where is the preparation? No hay crop, shortage of grain, near complete loss of the Irish potato crop, near complete loss of UK early potato crop, ground too wet to plant anything; and all before a not too warm, wet summer. Nature has made no preparations at all; the winter therefore will be reasonably benign – true, harder in some places than others, but nothing like what we have just had. I hope that kills stone dead any such notions too of a long hard cold winter – trust nature, not soothsayers and journalists with no knowledge of what they write about.

Not only farmers but horticulturalists too have and are having a bad time too, plant nurseries a bad spring for sure, those that cut grass – ground too wet, the roofers and Thatcher’s too a bad time, the only good news I can offer, is, and I repeat, this year 2018 is the last of the normal 7 year run of bad summers. 2019 will be the first of a run of 7 better (5 at least) summers to come. All this wet is nature filling the water reserves (severely depleted in some regions) ready for the better times – we have to learn to live with it.

The blackthorn winter/Buchan cold period, again much to the surprise of weather presenters, came and went on time, though this year hardly a lot of blossoms and precious few wild flowers either, all part of the very late spring – everything (except in London) in later this year and 99% of us wait hopefully for some spring.

*The cold miserable cloudy overcast Blackthorn winter gave me time to sit down and put the second book together. I met with my publisher before writing and tried to work something out, sadly, as soon as you put just one coloured picture into a book the price doubles. To ask anyone to pay £25 for a book is not my thinking at all. Therefore a compromise was agreed, same size, same format, same price, but no pictures.*

*I have written a year from January to December by the month, what to see, birds, flowers trees animals, the caveat being that such a vast subject in 220 pages will not go – but I hope I have whetted enough appetites to buy the book and go look and see. It is an introduction to the countryside.*

*I have used the Collins Book of British Wild Flowers as my picture book. If I mention a plant then I put the page number of this book into the text eg (red deadnettle pp158). The Collins book is in full colour with superb descriptive notes and therefore far superior to anything I could ever produce. I hope this compromise is acceptable.*

*I will inform all when it is available via the website, the cost will be the same £12.99, the writing style – though I am no William Shakespeare is the same, and hopefully will be ready later in the year. I hope I can generate some interest to go and see how nature looks after us all. The title is ‘David King’s weather almanac,’ the dictionary definition I think is near perfect.*

Request please, I will always answer e-mails, however a sample here; "Hello, I saw you on TV and saw your forecasts. I am getting married on the 5<sup>th</sup> September can you tell me the weather please?"

Just a cursory glance will reveal the problems to such a request – I am not a clairvoyant, if therefore please include your post code and time in such a request – I am then able to better answer you request. Thank you for your participation – you help me, I can help you.

Why do I suggest that you delay planting out bedding plants until late May? The ice-maidens 11-15<sup>th</sup> and Buchan Cold period at the same time are periods of colder than average temperatures – with a very strong possibility of hard overnight frosts too. These frosts can and do destroy soft plants and fruit blossoms overnight – exactly as the frost on 27<sup>th</sup> April 2017. There is also such a night 19/20<sup>th</sup> St Dunstan/Cold Sophie, hence the suggestion that a delay in planting out may well be propitious. This late frost is particularly prevalent in the south west of the UK, and goes under various local names too.

Second Sunday in May is called Chestnut Sunday, a Druid festival; on this day the flowers of horse chestnut tree known as candles all appear to sit at the end of the branches. From a distance the tree looks just like a Christmas tree with candles at the edges; it is normally a dry, sunny, albeit cool, but calm day, wait for the sun to shine behind the tree and then see the magical effect.

For those who have asked, I have a tacit agreement with ITV This Morning to appear the first week of June; however, the studios on the South Bank in London are now closed – and the new venue is the White City, the old BBC building, hopefully the logistics can be sorted..

For those that live in East Anglia, a wonderful year for Dandelion Day, most dandelions for many a year too, make the best of such an abundance

MAY 2018

NEW MOON = 15th @ 1349hrs = Very rainy  
1st QUARTER MOON = 22nd @ 0550hrs = Rain  
FULL MOON 29th @ 1620hrs = Rain  
LAST QUARTER MOON 8th @ 0411hrs = Rain.

DoP = 25th St Urban

ETA AQUARIDS 6th - 7th = Above average meteor shower

Highest spring tides 15th to 19th

APOGEE 6th @ 0136hrs: PERIGEE 17th @ 2207hrs

BUCHAN COLD PERIOD 9<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup>

NO MET OFFICE PERIODS

- |                  |  |  |
|------------------|--|--|
| 1st              | May Day                                | Hoar frost today indicates good harvest. Plants in full growth. The later the Blackthorn blooms after 1st May, the better the rye. |
| 3rd              | Holy Cross Day<br>St Philip & St James | Crowfoot blossom time.<br>If it rains, and/or a fertile year may be expected, and/or foretells a wet harvest.                      |
| 6 <sup>th</sup>  | Apogee @ 0136hrs                       |  |
| 10th             | Ascension Day                          | As the weather today so may be the entire autumn   |
| 11th             | St Mamertus                            | Ice-Saint - beware of frost - unseasonally cold and/or wet weather}  |
| 12th             | St Pancras                             | .....as above.....Ice Maidens = night frost}   |
| 13th             | St Servatius<br>Chestnut Sunday        | .....as above.....}  |
| 14th             | St Boniface                            | .....as above.....}  |
| 16 <sup>th</sup> | Whit Monday                            | The weather today reflects that of Maundy Thursday (24 <sup>th</sup> March)  |
| 17th             | Perigee @ 2207hrs                      |  |
| 19th             | St Dunstan (cold Sophie).              | Ice Saint with characteristics as above for ice-maidens.   |

20<sup>th</sup> Pentecost If the sun shines on Easter Day, so it will at Whitsun.  
Strawberries at Whitsun = good wine.  
If it happens to rain on Whitsunday, thunder and lightning would follow (thunder yes – but much rain is doubtful). Rain on Whitsunday is said to make the wheat mildew.  
Whitsunday rain is a blessing on the wine.

21st Whit Monday - see weather for Maundy Thursday = 29th March.

22nd Dandelion picking day in East Anglia for dandelion wine.

24th Celtic celebration day for bringing prosperity and good harvest.

25th St Urban DoP. Day of Prediction up to 15th June (St Vitus). Summer starts.

27th Trinity Sunday

31st Corpus Christi Clear gives a good year. If rain, the granary will be light.

Full moon this month is known as Full Flower Moon.

Willow tree up to 12th, thereafter Hawthorn.

#### *General notes and comments.*

*If you are looking for a good summer, the best May weather you need should be cold and rainy.*

*May can be/likely to be cold, but nothing strange in this.*

*He who doffs his coat on a winter's day will gladly put it on in May.*

*A cold May gives full barns and empty churchyards.*

*Goddess of Spring. Sacred Hawthorn tree blossoms this month.*

*Severe gales are very much the exception to the rule, though boisterous breezes are fairly common.*

*E/NE winds reach their greatest frequency during April and May.*

*SE England, London in particular, suffers from more short intense storms than any other part of the country.*

*April and May are the best time to visit Scotland.*

*The later the Blackthorn in bloom after the 1st May, the better the rye and harvest.*

*He who shears his sheep before St Mamertus Day (11th) loves his wool more than his sheep.*

*If rough winds do shake the darling buds of May, and summer's lease hath all too short a stay.*

*A cold wet May is good for corn and hay, a dry May fortells a wholesome summer.*

*Flowers in May good cocks of hay. Water in May - bread all year.*

*Rain in May makes plenty of hay.  
A cold May and windy, a full barn will find ye.*

*St Urban (25th) gives the summer.  
[this does give an indication, a fair indication - it can however be ambiguous or a little optimistic]*

*Ne're cast a clout till May be out, button to chin till June be in,  
if you change in June you change too soon.  
Change in July? You'll catch a cold bye and bye.  
Change in August if you must.  
Be sure to remember change back in September.*

*Mist in May, heat in June, puts the harvest right in tune/makes the harvest come right soon.*

*A leaky May and dry June makes harvest come right soon.*

*A May flood never did anyone any good.*

*Who sows his oats in May has little to repay.*

*A swarm of bees in May is worth a load of hay.*

*When bees leave their hive then it's good to be alive, when they all go home again then it's surely going to rain.*

*When the Mulberry tress begins to shoot, the last frost has gone.  
[Impeccable reference]*

*Spring will not settle properly until the cowslips have died down.*

*When September has been rainy, the following May is generally dry; and when May is dry, September is apt to be wet. [check previous readings in each case]  
[the above however is not really reliable - however - If May is well above the average for rain then the same can be said for September being above average for rain too.*

*AND*

*If May is drier than average then September is likely to be drier than average too.  
ALL THE ABOVE FROM LOCAL READINGS.*

*Fogs in March - frosts in May.  
[this is quite accurate. In London there on average, four foggy mornings in March and an average of four nights of ground frost in May. Check local readings]  
Franklins Frost strikes Devon 19th, 20th & 21st May.  
To conclude. May is a most uncertain month. A month of variable temperatures and rainfall.*

*Northerly winds over northern Europe reach their highest frequency around 15th June. But are rare after 20th June.*

*Meanwhile SW winds blow comparatively infrequently from late March until 10th June, but are very much more common during the rest of June.*

*From the same research, taking England & Wales as a whole, the driest months of the year are:- March, April & May, and occasionally February and June. These months are also the months when long drags of unsettled westerly winds are unlikely to occur.>>>*

*Monthly rainfall is between 2.3/2.6 ins (58/66mms) for each month from February to June.*

*From July onwards 3.2/3.8ins (81/96mms).*

*The hay crop is harvested at the end of May & June, so any reference to a good hay crop implies good weather then.*

*A hot May makes a fat churchyard.  
A May wet was never kind yet, a May flood never did good.*

*Mud in May, grain in August.*

*Cool & evening dew in May, brings wine and much hay.*

*The more thunder in May, the less in August and September.*

**FULL MOON THIS MONTH KNOWN AS FLOWER MOON.**

**Willow tree up-to 12th. Thereafter Hawthorn from 13th.**

#### **MONTHLY AVERAGES FOR EDENBRIDGE (USING 1981-2010 FIGURES)**

Mean Max: 19.3C      Mean Min: 7.1C      Mean Avg: 13.2C  
Rainfall: 58.9mm      Sunshine: 197.8hrs (Day = 6.38hrs)

Whilst I appreciate the above are local figures, it will be an indication of what the averages are, and, of course there will be local variations. Such variations can be found by trawling the various weather websites, or by using the superb data found in the Climatologists Observers Link website.

The following figures are for the average temperature at 12 noon and again at 4pm, taken at the beginning and again at the end of the month.

|                  |       |       |
|------------------|-------|-------|
| 1 <sup>st</sup>  | 15.7C | 16.9C |
| 31 <sup>st</sup> | 18.8C | 19.9C |

| May-18     |     |      |         |     |                |                |                   |                    |            |        |            |               |
|------------|-----|------|---------|-----|----------------|----------------|-------------------|--------------------|------------|--------|------------|---------------|
| Date       | Day | Moon | Weather | DoP | Saint/Holy Day | Other Day      | Apogee<br>Perigee | Equinox<br>Eclipse | Met Office | Buchan | Super-moon | Highest tides |
| 01/05/2018 | T   |      |         |     |                | May Day        |                   |                    | NONE       |        |            |               |
| 02/05/2018 | W   |      |         |     |                |                |                   |                    |            |        |            |               |
| 03/05/2018 | T   |      |         |     | St Philip &    | Holy Cross Day |                   |                    |            |        |            |               |
| 04/05/2018 | F   |      |         |     | St James       |                |                   |                    |            |        |            |               |
| 05/05/2018 | S   |      |         |     |                |                |                   |                    |            |        |            |               |
| 06/05/2018 | S   |      |         |     |                |                | Apogee            |                    |            |        |            |               |
| 07/05/2018 | M   |      |         |     |                |                | 0136hrs           |                    |            |        |            |               |
| 08/05/2018 | T   | LQ   | Rain    |     |                |                |                   |                    |            |        |            |               |
| 09/05/2018 | W   |      |         |     |                |                |                   |                    |            | cold   |            |               |
| 10/05/2018 | T   |      |         |     | Ascension Day  |                |                   |                    |            | period |            |               |
| 11/05/2018 | F   |      |         |     |                | St Mamertus    | frost             |                    |            | 9th    |            |               |
| 12/05/2018 | S   |      |         |     |                | St Pancras     | }                 |                    |            | to     |            |               |
| 13/05/2018 | S   |      |         |     | Chestnut       | St Servatius   | }                 |                    |            | 14th   |            |               |
| 14/05/2018 | M   |      |         |     | Sunday         | St Boniface    | }                 |                    |            |        |            |               |
| 15/05/2018 | T   | NEW  | Very    |     |                |                |                   |                    |            |        |            | highest       |
| 16/05/2018 | W   |      | rainy   |     |                |                |                   |                    |            |        |            | 15th          |
| 17/05/2018 | T   |      |         |     |                |                | Perigee           |                    |            |        |            | to            |
| 18/05/2018 | F   |      |         |     |                |                | 2207 hrs          |                    |            |        |            | 19th          |
| 19/05/2018 | S   |      |         |     |                | St Dunstan     | }                 |                    |            |        |            | ]             |
| 20/05/2018 | S   |      |         |     | Pentecost      |                |                   |                    |            |        |            |               |
| 21/05/2018 | M   |      |         |     | Whit Monday    |                |                   |                    |            |        |            |               |
| 22/05/2018 | T   | 1stQ | Rain    |     |                | Dandelion day  |                   |                    |            |        |            |               |
| 23/05/2018 | W   |      |         |     |                |                |                   |                    |            |        |            |               |
| 24/05/2018 | T   |      |         |     |                | Celtic day     |                   |                    |            |        |            |               |
| 25/05/2018 | F   |      |         | YES |                | St Urban       |                   |                    |            |        |            |               |
| 26/05/2018 | S   |      |         |     |                |                |                   |                    |            |        |            |               |
| 27/05/2018 | S   |      |         |     | Trinity Sunday |                |                   |                    |            |        |            |               |
| 28/05/2018 | M   |      |         |     |                |                |                   |                    |            |        |            |               |
| 29/05/2018 | T   | FULL | Rain    |     |                |                |                   |                    |            |        |            |               |
| 30/05/2018 | W   |      |         |     |                |                |                   |                    |            |        |            |               |
| 31/05/2018 | T   |      |         |     | Corpus Christi |                |                   |                    |            |        |            |               |

| DATE | Chandler & Gregory<br>Barry & Perry | Brooks | Lamb | Buchan | Met Office | Season |
|------|-------------------------------------|--------|------|--------|------------|--------|
|------|-------------------------------------|--------|------|--------|------------|--------|

May 01  
May 02  
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May 25  
May 26  
May 27  
May 28  
May 29  
May 30  
May 31

29th to 16th May  
northerly weather  
with some  
anti-cyclonic periods

9th - 14th  
cold  
period

21st - 31st  
anti-cyclonic period  
fine weather

30/3 - 17/6  
spring

30/3 - 17/6  
spring