

Yorkshire Weather of the Past

1315/16 - These years were unusually rainy in the North of England. The crops withered and died, unripened in the fields, and famine was rife.

1746 - In this year the grass withered in the fields, leaves fell prematurely from the trees, and neither rain nor dew fell for several months. Prayers were offered up in the churches, to implore the bounty of refreshing showers.

1763 - Dec 26th, owing to a sudden thaw and heavy rain after a great fall of snow, the river Aire rose to such a height at Leeds that it forced down its banks at the head of the high dam, where it formed a new channel, and swept away an acre of soil out of School Close, besides washing down several large trees at the Parks, close to the banks of the river. The damage was estimated at £1,000.

1775 - October 20th. There happened this day a most dreadful Inundation at Leeds, Mirfield and other places. Several Lives were lost and many Bridges carried away by the Fury of the Torrent. Part of Ledgard Bridge in Mirfield was broken down and swept away by the current.

1790 - In December, the snow was three feet deep. After a sudden thaw and heavy rain, the Aire and other rivers rose higher than they had ever done since the memorable flood of 1775, when several bridges were destroyed. In the flood this year, Mr. GILYARD'S dye house, on Sheepscar Beck, near Leeds, was washed away, with a large quantity of cloth.

1795 - 9th Feb. The River Aire, which had been frozen for a considerable time, exhibited a most appalling scene, occasioned by a rapid thaw and heavy rain, which broke up the ice and swelled the river so as to inundate all the lower streets in Leeds, where incalculable mischief was done by the foaming torrent and the immense blocks of floating ice, which carried away cloth and tenters from the fields, threw down walls, dye houses and several dwelling houses, and greatly injured the bridge, across one of the arches of which a boat was forced on its broad side, and at length broken to pieces by a vast accumulation of ice and water which, if the vessel had not given way, would have soon overthrown the bridge itself, as was feared by the anxious spectators of this destructive flood, which drowned three men in Hunslet dam, and floated down the river, horses, carts, timber furniture, etc. etc. in rapid succession. All the principal rivers in the county of York exhibited a similar spectacle, and the roads in various places were laid so deep in water, as to stop the mails and coaches several days; a man was drowned at Dewsbury Mills; three at Aldborough; and Mr. John ROBINSON, of Frizinghall Mills, lost his life in attempting to cross the road near his own dwelling; a boat laden with coal was sunk with its crew in the Calder, and several bridges were carried away in various parts of the county.

1798 - After a thunderstorm and heavy fall of rain, on June 6th the river Aire rose two yards in half an hour; by the lightning a boy was killed at Wibsey, and a barn destroyed at Yeadon.

1799 - Heavy rain at this time made the current of the Aire so dangerous that navigation of the River was suspended.

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1826 - June 28th, in this year, one of the most severe thunderstorms ever remembered, prevailed in the neighbourhood of York. At Poppleton, to the west of that city, hailstones fell in great abundance, and of unusual dimensions, some measuring five inches in circumference. Several inhabitants had every square of glass in the premises broken and many of the gardens were laid waste by the storm

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1826 - The thermometer was at 85 on Saturday and Sunday in the shade, and in the sun 124. Such was the drought and sultriness of the weather, that even in the midst of the hay harvest prayers were offered up in the churches and other places of worship for rain.

1831 - 30th July, On Saturday, this date, Leeds and its immediate neighbourhood was visited by a thunder storm between two and four o'clock. An immense quantity of rain fell in a very short time. The highways and streets were literally converted into rivers; and in Briggate, some of the market people had no little difficulty in preventing their various articles of sale being contributory to the Aire, the volume of which very soon nearly doubled. The water did much damage to buildings and goods in cellars in various parts of the town.

1833 - May 15th. a storm of hail and rain, with thunder and lightning, burst over the greater part of the West Riding. LEEDS - The principal damage was done to hot-houses by hailstones; about twenty six squares of glass were broken in the museum lights at the Leeds philosophical society. The hot-houses of Mr. HEBBLETHWAITE, Woodhouse Lane, Mr. PONTEY, Clay Pit Lane, Mr. CLAPHAM Mr. COXON, Chapeltown, were damaged. PONTEFRACT - At Pontefract, the storm was very alarming, and did much damage. It is said that some of the hailstones which fell there measured from four and a half to five inches in circumference, and weighed an ounce. KEIGHLEY - At Keighley, the storm was one of most tremendous ever witnessed by the oldest inhabitants. CLAYTON HEIGHTS - At Clayton Heights, scarcely a window in any of the houses was left whole. BRADFORD - A cabin at the Low moor company, near Bradford, was struck by the lightning and killed a boy named SPEAK. GOLCAR - A poor man, of the name of ARMITAGE, of Lindley, was killed by the electric fluid at Golcar, near Huddersfield. The deceased left a widow and nine children. LEEDS - The thermometer at the Leeds Philosophical Hall stood at eighty degrees in the shade

1833 - On Tuesday, the 3rd December, Yorkshire and the adjacent counties were visited by one of the most tremendous hurricanes ever remembered. Early in the morning the rain began to fall, and towards noon the wind blew with great violence from the west and north-west. At Leeds as at other places, stacks of chimneys were blown down, lead and slates forced away, whole windows in many cases blown in, and trees, etc uprooted. At the residence of Mr. Richard HEAPS, plumber, of Headingley Hill Top, a chimney fell into the yard; and shortly afterwards, another chimney was blown down, falling upon the roof and

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through the ceiling, burying the servant girl and the eldest child of HEAPS's about two years old, in the ruins. An infant child of Mrs. HEAPS's was knocked out of her arms and so alarmed her, that she jumped out of the window eight or nine feet high, to obtain assistance. The servant girl was found to have her leg broken; the oldest child had her face much bruised, her thigh dislocated, and her leg broken. The infant was unhurt. The chimneys and roofs of two houses in Mount Preston were blown off, in the occupation of Mr. STOTT and Mr. BROWN. The factory chimney of Messrs. READ and NEWBY, near St. Peters Hill, was blown down, and killed a horse in the stable. A chimney at Mr. STIRK'S iron foundry was blown down. The greater portion of Mr. FAIRBAIRN'S chimney at Westend was blown down. Woodhouse church, and the residence of Mr. Gilyard SCARTH, at Gipton Lodge, were partly unroofed; and the belfry at the Corn Exchange was blown down. In the neighbourhood, and all the country round, immense damage was done, through the instances of loss of life were very few.

1837 - Dec 21st. the extremely heavy rain for two or three days proceeding this time, produced one of the highest and most sudden floods ever known in Yorkshire. In Leeds Water Lane, School close and Lady Bridge, Lady Lane, suffered the most. The streets were rendered impassable. The water in some places being four or five feet high. The water in Messrs MARSHALLS Mill, was thirteen inches higher than the level of Water Lane, much damage was done to property in the vicinity of the flood. At Bradford, Halifax, and other places the water did much damage.

1837 - At Bradford, on Wednesday, the 20th of December, the rain descended in torrents for six or eight hours, and this, with the almost incessant rain for several days, caused a most alarming flood. The water in the beck had increased so considerably that the inhabitants in the lower parts of the town began to remove their goods. About two o'clock, the passage being choked up, the water shortly overflowed the whole of the lower part of the town. One continuous and impetuous current flowed from the end of Thornton road down Tyrell Street, over the area of the Sun Bridge, Bridge Street, Market Street, and Well Street; and reaching up the hill as far as Hustler Gate on one side, and Skinner Lane on the other. In many parts of the streets the stream was six feet in depth. From the Old Brewery, not only an immense number of empty casks, but several barrels of ale were swept away. At one time, a wagon laden with wood was seen majestically floating down the stream. The loss of property, especially by grocers, in the lower part of the town was very great. Three persons perished in the flood: Thomas KEETON, head ostler at the Sun Inn, while attempting to save some floating casks, slipped into a water course in Union Street, and was drowned. A female named Susannah LIGHTOWLER, of Wibsey, while attempting to cross Thornton road was swept away. A child belonging to Thomas TAYLOR, in Dunkirk Street, was drowned in a cellar before the mother could get it away. The loss to poor cottagers was very considerable.

1840 - January 25th. The heavy rain at this time caused the river Aire to overflow. A rapid stream flowed down Water Lane, through Dock Street, and extended far along Meadow Lane and Hunslet Lane, flooding many houses.

1844 - June 24th. Leeds and the neighbourhood was visited by a violent thunderstorm. At o'clock p.m. the whole town was almost enveloped in darkness. The flashes of lightning were

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very vivid, and the peals of thunder extremely loud and oft repeating. The hothouses at Swillington hall were damaged to the value of several hundred pounds. Mr. C. GRANGE, carrier, on his way from Pateley Bridge to Leeds had one of his horses killed and the other severely injured. At Horsforth the electric fluid set fire to a cottage. The branches of a fine tree were splintered, and a cow killed belonging to Mr. STANSFELD. At Bramley a chimney was thrown down and damage done to several dwellings. At Pudsey a large haystack was completely severed in two and set on fire. At Barwick in Elmet Several houses were unroofed. At Gildersome two women, one the wife of Mr. HARTLEY, manufacturer, and the other named HARRISON, were struck by the lightning and seriously injured. At Huddersfield the storm did much damage, flooding the streets in the lower part of the town four or five feet deep. At Halifax the streets in a line with Gibbet Street and Cross Street were covered with a broad stream of considerable depth. At Billingley, near Barnsley, Mr. MICKLETHWAITE had a mare and foal killed. At Hoyland a calf and sheep belonging to Mr. RUSSELL, were killed. At Edwardthorpe, Mrs. BARKER, had a calf killed whilst held in a string by a little girl, who was unhurt. At Selby, with the fall of the rain, there was a shower of frogs. Several were caught in their descent by holding out hats for that purpose. They were about the size of a horse bean and remarkably lively after their aerial but wingless flight.

1846 - Owing to the heavy fall of rain at this time there were great floods in Yorkshire. The river Aire and other rivers were swollen to a great height, in many places overflowing their banks, and doing immense damage.

1850 - Feb 5th. Leeds was visited this evening by a most terrific storm of wind and rain. One of the pinnacles of St. Ann's Roman Catholic Church was blown off, the stones of which it consisted falling upon and through the roof into the church. A new building, fourteen yards long and three stories high, just erected above the boiler houses on the premises of Messrs. J. WILKINSON and Co., flax spinners, at Hunslet, was also blown down. In other parts of Yorkshire, the storm raged with great violence, doing considerable damage.

1854- On Tuesday afternoon the 2nd May, Leeds was visited by a thunderstorm, which unhappily involved the loss of two lives. The scene of the most serious calamity was the new Roman Catholic chapel, in the course of erection at Richmond Hill. shortly before half past one o'clock, five of the workmen employed at the chapel took shelter from a heavy shower of rain beneath an arch, which sprung from a buttress at the angle of the north transept. They had not taken refuge for more than five minutes, when there was a long vivid flash of lightning, succeeded by a loud sharp peal of thunder, which struck down a corpse, John RILEY. The lightning stripped off every particle of his clothing, and tore it to shreds. The electric fluid rent the buttress from top to bottom, and flung massive stones to an immense distance. The other four men were buried under the stones which had formed the buttress. John CUMMINGS, aged 55, was crushed to a frightful degree, and died at the Infirmary the same evening. John FOY, Thomas MACDORRACK and J.J. WILSON, were also crushed, but not fatally. William BULMER, who was employed in working the windlass at the top of the well, near to the chapel, was laid prostrate with his thigh broken. The windlass was wrenched from his grasp and shattered to pieces. A man named JUDSON who was excavating in the well, was so mangled and crushed by stones that he was scarcely alive.

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Some idea of the force of the lightning may be formed, when it is stated that stones of the weight of sixty pounds were thrown a distance of 150 yards. About the same time as this sad occurrence, two horses proceeding along Pontefract Lane, drawing coal carts, were killed by the lightning, the drivers escaped.

1856 - August 9th. An extraordinary fall of rain caused great floods in various parts of Yorkshire, and also a serious loss of life and property. At Leeds during the day nearly two inches of rain, or about a quart fell in every twelve square inches.

1857 - Aug 14th. The very heavy rain about the middle of this month caused high floods in various parts of the country. Immense damage was done to crops in the neighbourhood of Selby. The loss of property by the flood at Ripponden near Halifax was estimated at not less than £10,000. The damage done to property at Huddersfield and the neighbourhood was very considerable. The fall of rain at Scarboro' on the 6th was so sudden and immense, that the drains were insufficient to carry away the water, and in consequence, considerable damage was done to property.

1858 - June 15th. A thunderstorm did damage to the extent of several thousand pounds at Chatsworth. The rain literally fell in torrents, and was succeeded by hailstones, some of which were six inches in circumference. So fearful a devastation at Chatsworth house and grounds was never known before.

1864 - A terrible disaster happened on March 12th 1864, when the Dale Dyke Dam near Bradfield collapsed after torrential rain allowing One hundred and fourteen million cubic feet of water to crash down the Loxley and Don Valleys. The loss of life was horrendous, two hundred and sixty people died, together with six hundred and ninety three animals. One hundred buildings and fifteen bridges were also lost in the deluge.