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Snowfalls are now just a thing of the past

BY CHARLES ONIANS | Monday 20 March 2000

Britain's winter ends tomorrow with further indications of a striking environmental change: snow is starting to disappear from our lives.

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Sledges, snowmen, snowballs and the excitement of waking to find that the stuff has settled outside are all a rapidly diminishing part of Britain's culture, as warmer winters - which scientists are attributing to global climate change - produce not only fewer white Christmases, but fewer white Januaries and Februaries.

The first two months of 2000 were virtually free of significant snowfall in much of lowland Britain, and December brought only moderate snowfall in the South-east. It is the continuation of a trend that has been increasingly visible in the past 15 years: in the south of England, for instance, from 1970 to 1995 snow and sleet fell for an average of 3.7 days, while from 1988 to 1995 the average was 0.7 days. London's last substantial snowfall was in February 1991.

Global warming, the heating of the atmosphere by increased amounts of industrial gases, is now accepted as a reality by the international community. Average temperatures in Britain were nearly 0.6°C higher in the Nineties than in 1960-90, and it is estimated that they will increase by 0.2C every decade over the coming century. Eight of the 10 hottest years on record occurred in the Nineties.

However, the warming is so far manifesting itself more in winters which are less cold than in much hotter summers. According to Dr David Viner, a senior research scientist at the climatic research unit (CRU) of the University of East Anglia, within a few years winter snowfall will become "a very rare and exciting event".

"Children just aren't going to know what snow is," he said.

The effects of snow-free winter in Britain are already becoming apparent. This year, for the first time ever, Hamleys, Britain's biggest toyshop, had no sledges on display in its Regent Street store. "It was a bit of a first," a spokesperson said.

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Fen skating, once a popular sport on the fields of East Anglia, now takes place on indoor artificial rinks. Malcolm Robinson, of the Fenland Indoor Speed Skating Club in Peterborough, says they have not skated outside since 1997. "As a boy, I can remember being on ice most winters. Now it's few and far between," he said.

Michael Jeacock, a Cambridgeshire local historian, added that a generation was growing up "without experiencing one of the greatest joys and privileges of living in this part of the world - open-air skating".

Warmer winters have significant environmental and economic implications, and a wide range of research indicates that pests and plant diseases, usually killed back by sharp frosts, are likely to flourish. But very little research has been done on the cultural implications of climate change - into the possibility, for example, that our notion of Christmas might have to shift.

Professor Jarich Oosten, an anthropologist at the University of Leiden in the Netherlands, says that even if we no longer see snow, it will remain culturally important.

"We don't really have wolves in Europe any more, but they are still an important part of our culture and everyone knows what they look like," he said.

David Parker, at the Hadley Centre for Climate Prediction and Research in Berkshire, says ultimately, British children could have only virtual experience of snow. Via the internet, they might wonder at polar scenes - or eventually "feel" virtual cold.

Heavy snow will return occasionally, says Dr Viner, but when it does we will be unprepared. "We're really going to get caught out. Snow will probably cause chaos in 20 years time," he said.

The chances are certainly now stacked against the sort of heavy snowfall in cities that inspired Impressionist painters, such as Sisley, and the 19th century poet laureate Robert Bridges, who wrote in "London Snow" of it, "stealthily and perpetually settling and loosely lying".

Not any more, it seems.

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TOP NEW OLD



GARY 573 days ago

Still snowing here Charles. Where did you get your 'scientific' data from? A box of Frosted Flakes?

Ok, we know where. So how are your referenced 'scientists' doing these days? Especially Dr. Viner (doctor of what? shilling for the AGW scammers?) Hiding their heads in shame I hope, but I'll bet they're still pushing the BS. I hope you learned a bloody good lesson not to listen to crackpot scientists looking for fortune and glory. I doubt it. There are simply too many of them around these days.

+ | 3 | -

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JAYDI 609 days ago

Hey Charlie you still making predictions?

+ | 1 | -



PSYCHO_PIGEON 625 days ago

looooooooooooooooooool

+ | 0 | -



IL BUI 638 days ago

What a scam! P.T. Barnum would be proud.

+ | 1 | -



WOODJA BLOMY 638 days ago

Hey, Charlie Onions:

Based on your article, I am sure you are by now fully transitioned to your new career - and I'd like you to supersize those fries, okay?

Seriously though, this is so typical of liberal lunacy. They actually BELIEVE this BS! They lie, misrepresent, twist, dissemble, equivocate, anything but tell the truth: this is nothing but the biggest scam in the history of the world. Brought to you by Al Gore, billionaire.

+ | 1 | -



PRIACQUI 638 days ago

It's been snowing for two days in Atlanta where it rarely snows at all. Prior to a few years ago, it barely snowed ever but hss snowed every year since I moved here in 2009. I'm not feeling the "global warming" love! LOLOL

+ | 0 | -



DAVID GOLDMAN 645 days ago

I hope that you came by, Michael. This is the article, over 15 years ago, that claimed that we would have no snow.

+ | 0 | -



DARYL SPINDLER 656 days ago

D'OH!!!!!!!

+ | 0 | -



DON MEGA 657 days ago

they are liars. best look ur news from alternative media cos don't forget it wasn't just independent that bought into this propaganda. now we all know better seeing the global cooling, including the 5 metres of snow in norway which isn't that far

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from uk. so it's both local and global and it's all to do with the sun cycles, not mankind's miniscule co2.

+ | 0 | -



PAT HACKETT 660 days ago

When we confuse local weather patterns (even over decades) with global warming, mistakes will be made and this can discredit global warming.
<http://gwandlocalwp.blogspot.co.uk/>

+ | 0 | -



WOODIA BLOMY 638 days ago

Don't worry about it. Global warming/cooling/climate change has already been fully discredited. Evidently no one sent you the memo. Comes from getting your news from liberal alphabet channels like ABC, NBC, CBS, CNN, NPR, CPB, PBS, MSNBC and such. Now get a life, loser.

+ | 0 | -



IL BUI 638 days ago

AGW is a myth. The Earth has been on a LONG term (climate) warming trend since the last major Ice Age. You could wipe all of mankind off the planet and that would NOT change.

+ | 0 | -



JOHN BENTON 673 days ago

"Children just aren't going to know what snow is"

This should be carved on Viner's headstone as a permanent reminder of his stupidity and hubris.

+ | 1 | -



JOHN BENTON 673 days ago

Like all other inconvenient data the old comments have been disappeared.

+ | 1 | -



NOD GLODNIG 707 days ago

ha ha! We get to show again what an incredibly stupid interview Dr David Viner did before he was kicked out of the CRU for foot in mouth disease no doubt.

+ | 1 | -



ELLIN SABIO 709 days ago

Where are the old comments?

+ | 1 | -



NOD GLODNIQ 707 days ago

Vanished like the melting snow.

They're probably all still over on DisQus but I bet the Independent didn't bother to pay for them to be copied overcopied over.

+ | 0 | -



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