

Tuckenhay Rainfall 1960-2012



Cloudburst, deluge, downpour, drizzle, lurping, mizzle, patter, pelt, pitter-patter, pour, raining buckets, raining cats and dogs, raining stair rods, rain shower, shower, soaker, spatter, spit, sprinkle, storm, stream, torrent, waterspout. Unrelenting, it has been.

So what are the figures, how is rainfall measured and should we hold out for the “barbeque summer” of our dreams? Sheila Johnson (and Robin before her) have been recording the rainfall figures in Tuckenhay for 52 years and there is hope.

At 9 a.m. each morning Sheila records the rainfall of the previous 24 hours using the conical gauge in the picture. This is the second rain gauge purchased since 1960 and will have held approximately 138.39 inches of rain. Approximately 2158.6 inches have been poured through the previous gauge. Sheila says that this started “for fun because we were interested” and encourages anyone to “just start” if they want to keep their own records. Similar gauges can be bought in garden centres and placement is not a problem.



Sheila pointed out that rainfall measurements are local and that Tuckenhay’s figures might be quite different from those on higher ground in Ashprington or Cornworthy. The advantage of the Tuckenhay figures was put to the test a few years ago when two insurance claims were upheld as a result of consulting Sheila. A landslip at Tuckenhay House might have been placed under the category of “act of God”, however figures could show unusually heavy rain for 4 days previous to the event. A substantial sum resulted! And a local builder was able to avoid penalties for over running his time due to an October of continuous downpours.

Recording figures and keeping archives have been lifelong passions for Sheila. For over forty five years she has been recording the nesting times and egg hatchings of a swan called Mary (results appreciated by Oxford Ornithological Institute). Sheila records the order of birds at the feeder, keeps a book of the visitors to Turvey, as well as her own daily diary each morning since 1945. The only break in records occurred on Friday July 6th 2012 when the rain gauge overflowed in the night destroying an exact reading the next morning. Might 50 years of figures be used to support an observation of climate change? Sheila says that there are trends but there are also surprises. For example: in 1992 from the 9th until the 30th of June it did not rain and in 1994 from the 3rd of October until the 18th there was a similar drought. However in both those years the rainfall was slightly higher than average for that decade. To see a trend: over the last four decades the average rainfall increased, first by 18% over ten years ('80s compared to the '70s), then by 4.9% in the next ten years ('90s compared to the '80s), and then by 16.6% during the early years of the millennium. Most worrying is the decade 2000 to 2009 when there was a 28% greater average rainfall than the total of the previous forty years. It is definitely raining more.



Sheila’s figures tell a lot about dry years. For 1976, the year of the severe drought, the rainfall was close to the average for that decade, but in 1975 the figure was 34% lower than the average and it was the driest in all of the 52 years recorded (23.71 inches).

The wettest year - 2009 - 62.5 inches !

Rainfall figures for Tuckenhay 1960 – 2011 (inches)
 Collected by Robin and Sheila Johnson, Turvey, Tuckenhay, Devon

1960	56.34	1970	37.77
1961	38.79	1971	29.32
1962	33.86	1972	42.84
1963	39.75	1973	27.83
1964	29.75	1974	42.01
1965	35.85	1975	23.71
1966	39.06	1976	34.4
1967	41.36	1977	41.15
1968	40.8	1978	39.06
1969	<u>42.82</u>	1979	<u>45.64</u>
Total	398.38		363.73
Monthly average	39.84		36.37

1990	39.67	2000	64.54
1991	43.85	2001	46.44
1992	44.27	2002	57.3
1993	56.22	2003	41.24
1994	52.12	2004	51.03
1995	37.63	2005	50.08
1996	35.21	2006	37.67
1997	38.9	2007	56.68
1998	44.94	2008	57.81
1999	<u>48.18</u>	2009	<u>62.5</u>
Total	440.99		525.29
Monthly average	44.1		52.53

