NEW ZEALAND WEATHER

BRIEF REVIEW OF THE WEATHER SUMMER 1984-85 (Fig. 1)

Rainfall totals were above average in the west of both Islands, while eastern districts of New Zealand had generally below normal rainfall this summer.

Over much of the country sunshine totals were near normal, and temperatures were generally higher than usual.

MONTHLY SUMMARIES DECEMBER 1984 - FEBRUARY 1985

December was generally a remarkably warm but often cloudy month. Much of the country recorded more rainfall than usual, with the north and west of the South Island being particularly wet. Areas recording below average rainfall include Gisborne and Wairarapa in the North Island, and South Canterbury and Otago in the South Island. A notable feature of this month was the high number of electrical storms — these were recorded in some part of the country on all but three days.

January was mild and generally sunny. Rainfall was mostly above normal except for parts of Northland, some areas of the east of the North Island, the Kaikoura Coast, Canterbury and Otago. Some areas of Canterbury had between 10 and 25 percent of normal rainfall. Heavy rain fell in Nelson and Marlborough on the 10th, flooding areas of Nelson.

Sunny dry conditions were experienced in many areas of New Zealand during **February.** Many farmers throughout the South Island and southern half of the North Island reported drought conditions. Serious flooding to the Thames Valley South Auckland regions occurred overnight on the 16th and 17th. At Coromandel 331 mm fell in the 24-hour period beginning at 9 a.m. on the 16th, and for the 8-hour period beginning at 8 p.m. 226 mm was recorded.

BRIEF REVIEW OF THE WEATHER AUTUMN 1985 (Fig. 2)

Rainfall was above average over Northern districts this season, but over the rest of the country dry conditions prevailed. Exceptionally dry sunny conditions persisted in parts of Canterbury and Otago.

While sunshine totals were generally normal or above normal, the east coast of the North Island was particularly cloudy.

Pressures remained high to the south and east of New Zealand throughout Autumn, and were lower than usual to the north of the country.

MONTHLY SUMMARIES MARCH - MAY 1985

March was cool but mostly dry and sunny. Over northern districts of the North Island the frequency of southeasterly winds was exceptional, being three times the average for March. Over the South Island the frequency of southwesterlies was also well above average. While very dry conditions were being experienced in parts of Otago and Canterbury, heavy rains in Gisborne and Hawkes Bay from the 13th to 15th resulted in massive slips along the Napier to Taupo Highway. South Island daytime maximum temperatures were near normal for the month, but temperatures were up to 1 °C lower than normal over the North Island.

April was dry in many regions with mean temperatures below normal over the North Island and nearly 2 °C higher than average, in places, over the South Island. Northeasterly winds prevailed over the country, resulting from sea level pressures being well above average to the east and south of New Zealand. The drought in the east of the South Island continued through April, with east coast districts reporting rainfalls of between 5 and 30 percent of normal.

Dry weather continued in most regions in **May,** with mean temperatures below normal in northern North Island areas, but about average elsewhere. Very high winds occurred in the Wellington and Kaikoura areas during a severe southerly storm from the 14th to the 16th. Over northern districts of the North Island winds from the easterly quarter prevailed, while over the South Island southwesterlies were more frequent than usual. Very dry conditions continued this month in Canterbury and Otago until the 13th when welcome rain fell. Sunshine was above average over most of the country.

Acknowledgment

The assistance of the New Zealand Meteorological Service is acknowledged in making available data from which this summary was compiled.

C. S. THOMPSON

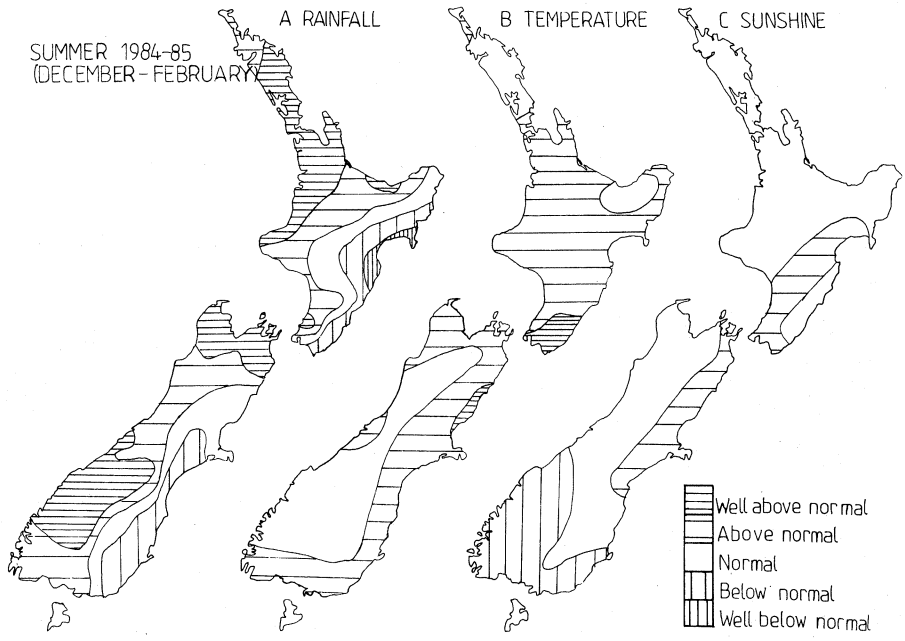

Fig. 1: Summer 1984-85: Rainfall (A) and temperature (B) departure maps based on observations from 46 stations. Sunshine (C) departure map based on observations from 52 stations.

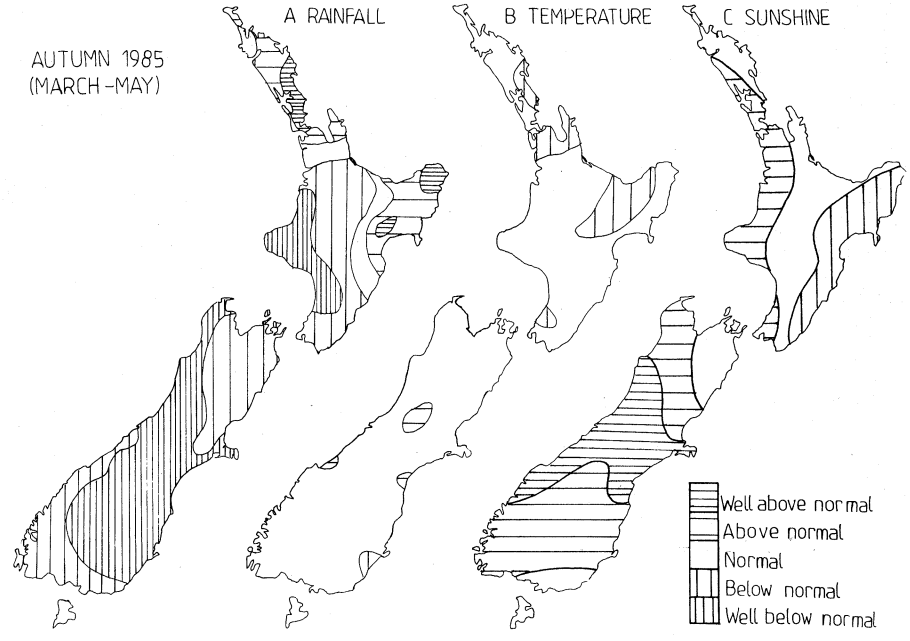

Fig. 2: Autumn 1985: Rainfall (A) and temperature (B) departure maps based on observations from 46 stations. Sunshine (C) departure map based on observations from 52 stations.

BOOK REVIEW

The World Weather Guide, by E. A. Pearce and C. G. Smith. Hutchinson, paperback, N.Z. retail $27.95.

The front cover of this almost quarto-sized book promises that it "tells you what weather you can expect in any part of the world at any time of the year". In 480 pages the authors succeed admirably in doing just that.

The scope and price of this book means that it is very much a reference work. The average traveller — whether for business or as a tourist — would not buy a copy, but he would certainly be glad if his travel agent had a copy. And every travel agency *should* have a copy: there has been nothing like this available before. Local libraries as well as those in colleges (or in their social science departments) would find this book valuable too.

The book is laid out helpfully, with sixteen pages of general and introductory information, followed by details charted for individual cities, after general comments about each country and climatic region. The comments are clear and non-technical, except for significant local words (e.g. "chinook") which are explained more fully in a glossary. Though inevitably fairly general, the comments would certainly be helpful to a traveller.

The chart for each city sets out monthly details of temperature (average daily maximum and minimum and the highest and lowest ever recorded), relative humidity (for two times of the day), and precipitation (both the average monthly total and the average number of rain days). For all cities readings are printed both in imperial (red) and metric (black).

I checked the sections for Australia and New Zealand with special interest. New Zealand is introduced by a poor map (p. 298), which nonetheless is sufficient to locate the six cities chosen — Auckland, Napier, Wellington, Christchurch, Hokitika and Dunedin. Perhaps other places could have usefully been included to give balance — e.g. Nelson. But overall the coverage is good, even generous by comparison with other countries covered. And the general comments are both accurate and helpful.

Twelve cities are features in Australia, providing good coverage. The figures for Sydney reminded me of a factor which is no doubt relevant in quite a few other cities too, especially those by the sea. The readings are for the Sydney Weather Bureau, which is sited to benefit from strong sea breezes. However many Western Suburbs people (at least 1 million) suffer substantially higher temperatures in summer.

Two minor errors showed up in the Australian information too. On page 299 Tasmania is said to escape the extremes of heat the other states suffer from. Though as a very broad generalisation this is true, the more detailed comment on Tasmania on page 308 catches the balance better in mentioning "occasional high temperatures in summer (over 38°C)". And the heat can be both fierce and extended: a family friend died in a heatwave-induced Tasmanian bushfire.

The introduction to Australia's weather on p. 299 gives "Willy Willies" as the local name on the north-west coast for tropical cyclones. The error is repeated in the glossary on p. 22. In fact the name is used right across Australia, generally in the singular and without capitals. It is an aboriginal one for what are also called "dust devils", short-lived small whirlwinds of dust, mostly only a metre or two across and not more than 20-30 metres high, which usually dissipate after less than a minute.

The book could be made more useful by two other changes. Firstly the section now headed "Introduction" could be given more prominence. It could be read with interest and profit by many travellers, who might miss its significance as it stands. Perhaps a new title like "Getting The Most Out Of The Facts" would help too.

And it would be helpful to have comments about local expectations about dress. For instance, it would help to be told that in Singapore shorts (even for men!) are not really acceptable, whereas in Papua New Guinea they are.

But these are small things. Inevitably such a book will have limitations. This one certainly gives the traveller a good start and a basis on which to write ahead, asking either "How do temperatures in your part of the city compare with the place where the weather readings are taken?" or "How does the climate in the town I'm to visit compare with city X (featured in this book)?" To be able to ask such questions is a great start in ensuring a comfortable trip!

So in a word, this book is RECOMMENDED.

HUMPHREY BABBAGE