

Michael Dukes

What inspired your interest in meteorology?

That's easy - as a child I loved playing in the snow and I started avidly watching the BBC's weather forecasts from as young as six, sitting cross-legged in front of the television, desperately hoping Jack Scott and co. would place one of those metallic snow symbols on top of where I lived.

Weather forecasts in those days were very educational and by the time I was ten I knew how to interpret the pressure maps and I would never miss the informative week ahead 'farming' forecast on Sunday lunchtimes. I grew up in Ilkley and my interest in all things meteorological was fuelled further by some exceptional snowy, cold winters in the late 1970s and early 80s. I remember in my last year at primary school we had to describe what we wanted to do when we 'grew up'. I put weather forecaster. The teacher crossed it out and wrote footballer. I crossed that out and insisted it was indeed weather forecaster! Right the way through secondary school I maintained a passionate interest in meteorology. I had my own mini weather station and kept a daily weather diary. The data from my back garden weather station came in particularly handy for school and was used successfully in 'O' level and 'A' level geography projects.



What job do you do now?

I am Forecast/General Manager for MeteoGroup UK. I've worked for the company since its inception (as PA WeatherCentre) in 1997. My main responsibilities these days are to manage the talented team of forecasters and to make sure the forecasts provide to our clients are of the highest standards. I also work closely with our Meteorological Research & Development team at our sister company, Meteo Consult in the Netherlands. The explosion in the amount and type of weather data available in the last five years means researching and developing new forecast products is one of the most exciting areas of meteorology to be involved in. I also still work lead-forecasting shifts in the winter months. I've always resisted pressure to stop doing these as I'm a firm believer it keeps me in touch with the science of forecasting and helps me in all the other aspects of my job, not to mention the enjoyment it brings.

How did you reach your current job?

After studying Geography at the University of Liverpool I went on to do a MSc. in Applied Meteorology and Climatology at the University of Birmingham. After that, my first job was as a Research Associate at the Climatic Research Unit, University of East Anglia, Norwich. I only stayed for 12 months but it was one of my most enjoyable years and working closely with inspirational climatologists such as Prof. Jean Palutikof and Dr. Clare Goodess was a real privilege. A chance meeting with Philip Eden led me away from climate research and into weather forecasting. Running my own small weather business, I worked closely with Philip Eden for several years in the mid 1990s, absorbing as many of his renowned forecasting skills as I could. In 1997 I joined the newly formed PA WeatherCentre and have had many interesting years watching and helping it grow into MeteoGroup, one of Europe's most significant weather businesses.