

Penny Tranter



What inspired your interest in Meteorology?

Living in southwest Scotland, as I did as a child, you get used to the changeable and at times wild nature of the weather and the sea. I was brought up close to the town of Troon on the Ayrshire coast with a view from our house out to the Firth of Clyde, the Kyles of Bute, Isle of Arran and the Mull of Kintyre. The weather then, as it probably does now as well, always featured quite highly in our daily life, and there is a local saying: If you cannot see the Isle of Arran - it is raining, and if you can see it - it will soon be raining!

My passion for weather though, really took off when the infamous Clyde Valley storm on 14/15 January 1968, caused extensive roof damage to our house and also to many other houses around us. I can still vividly recall the roaring noise of the wind that night, and as a young child, I was very scared! I remember it was a huge talking point the next morning and we watched the TV to see the devastation that had happened across vast swathes of southwest Scotland. And I remember about 20 people were killed and that it badly affected parts of Glasgow, especially the Gorbals area, where residents in the high blocks of flats said they had 'swung like a swing!' This extreme weather event made me curious about how weather worked and the environment, and how weather could be so bad that it could cause destruction and also death.

After a family move to southern England, to Salisbury in my teenage years, this interest intensified, as the weather was very different from western Scotland - and I wanted to know why! I even made a mini-weather station in the garden, including a plastic rain gauge, which I did as part of my Guide Weather badge. I knew in my teenage years that I wanted to become a weather forecaster and I can remember watching Bert Foord and Barbara Edwards on the TV, and starting to learn about the weather maps and the different weather that the different weather patterns gave.

What job do you do now?

Since January 2008, I have been the Meteorology Training Manager at the Met Office College at the Met Office HQ in Exeter. We train all our weather forecasters there, as well as providing other weather training for other roles within the Met Office. We are also increasingly providing weather courses for external customers - varying from Government Departments to the media.

This new job is very exciting and I am currently learning new skills from budgets and procurement to actually running a 2 day training course. It uses many skills that I have already gained: weather forecasting, working to tight deadlines and under pressure, liaising and working with the Met Office's customers and managing a highly skilled team of people. A typical day may include: dealing with a request to price a new training course, resolving student issues, working on our course schedules for 2009 and liaising with the College staff to ensure we are keeping our course content up to date and accurate.

Although I miss all my colleagues at the BBC, I am not missing working shifts!

How did you reach your current job?

I joined the Met Office as a trainee weather forecaster in 1983 after my degree. I gained a good deal of UK weather forecasting experience and knowledge in the following 9 years, from working

in different Met Office centres around the country from Glasgow to Southampton, and from Norwich to Plymouth. From 1992-2008 I worked in the BBC Weather Centre as a weather presenter. I regularly broadcasted on TV and radio on BBC 1, BBC 2, BBC 4, News 24, BBC World, BFBS, Radio 2, Radio 4 and Radio 5 Live.

Qualifications

Degree in Environmental Sciences at University of East Anglia (Norwich) majoring in weather and climate

Chartered Meteorologist and a Fellow of the Royal Meteorological Society.

A levels in Maths, Chemistry, Geography.