White days in Wagga

The Daily Advertiser recorded in detail the way in which the people of Wagga responded to this weather anomaly and the effects it had on normal daily routines. One frightened youngster upon seeing snow for the very first time described it as “White blotches that don’t make any noise as they come tumbling down through the air.”

Snow began falling at 5:30am and didn’t stop for three hours, so many early risers and those people whose occupations compelled them to be up and about, were quite shocked to find snow falling so heavily.

Younger people, and some oldsters, who had never indulged in the past-time, lost no time in getting on some clothes and going out for a good game of snowballs. One enthusiast, content with only pyjamas and slippers, waged war on all and sundry, including the milk boy.

“In the streets the fun was fast and furious. In Fitzmaurice Street no one was safe from attack, but the crowd was on the whole good humored, and took its pelting individually with what grace it could.

“Snowmen were to be seen in one or two places, and huge balls of snow were also rolled around.”

The snow brought business in the town to a standstill for most of the morning. The Daily Advertiser reported that the amount of work done in the morning must have been very minimal as everyone made the most of the novelty.

The snow had mostly vanished by midday except for a few spots on the hills and higher ground.

“It had disappeared and become only a memory – but an historic memory.”

Historic no doubt it will be if snow visitations are as few in the future as they have been in the past.”

Oddly enough, less than two years later in 1911, another fall occurred in Wagga. However, it was much smaller and more sleet than snow. In more recent times, perhaps one of the heaviest snowfalls to occur was on Monday, August 17, 1970.

The front page of The Daily Advertiser reported that for some Riverview locals this was the first time snow had fallen.

The snow was at its deepest in Wagga on the higher parts of Williams Hill, with many parents driving up to Captain Cook Drive so their children could play in the snow.

Strangely in other parts of Wagga the falls were much lighter and by breakfast time had all but disappeared.

On the hills surrounding Wagga, the snow lasted a little longer until mid-morning. Not surprisingly the falls at Adelewood, Ballow, Tumut and Tumbaramba were much heavier – upwards of 12 inches.

Harden, Cootamundra and Young also received some of the heaviest falls in living memory, while The Rock, Culcairn, Mangoplah, Wonga Creek, Big Springs and Gregadoo also had considerable falls.

While no doubt a novelty for most, the snowfalls did create some problems. Telephone communications between a large number of towns were interrupted, the roads became extremely hazardous for driving, there was an exceptionally high demand for gas and electricity and at the Southern Poultry Supply Farm in Kooragang, 1400 young turkeys froze to death in the freezing conditions.

Even the beer was getting too cold if left outside.

Mr Norm Achin, working at the Union Club Hotel bottle shop, told The Daily Advertiser that “it was warmer in the cool room than outside. ‘The beer’s getting too cold if it’s left out in the open,’ he said.”