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"Major cold: streams and marshes frozen solid"

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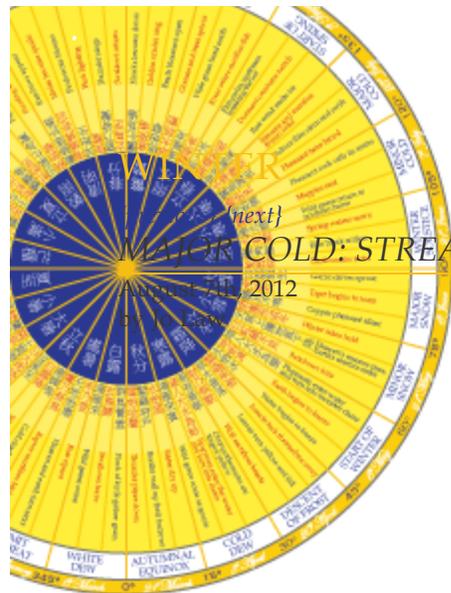


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THE ILLAWARRA AND BEYOND



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{CALENDAR}

December 2012

MTWTFSS

Beautiful sunny days continued into this pentad with the highest maximum reaching 20.8°C on Sunday August 5th. The highest overnight minimum was 11.5°C. No rainfall was recorded during this period and humidity remained low (between 30% and 62%). Far from 'streams and marshes frozen solid', feelings of cold melted away when one basked in the warm sun. My birthday is amongst these last days of winter.

24 25 26 27 28 29 30

The first half of my life (so far) was spent in the northern hemisphere when my birthday was at the height of summer. When I attended boarding school in Britain, friends whose birthdays fell during term might elect to hold parties at school. Cakes, crisps, and other various treats could be ordered from the school's kitchen. Until the school decided that allowing young teenagers access to alcoholic beverage might be unwise, cider was also on the menu. My birthday was always in the summer holidays.

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Many cultures mark the birth of a child. But when infant mortality was much higher, it was customary to celebrate the event a little while into the baby's life. In Chinese culture, a 'full moon/ month' banquet (满月酒) is often held when families, relatives and friends gather to welcome the new addition. Similarly, Korean culture marks the 100th day of a child's life.

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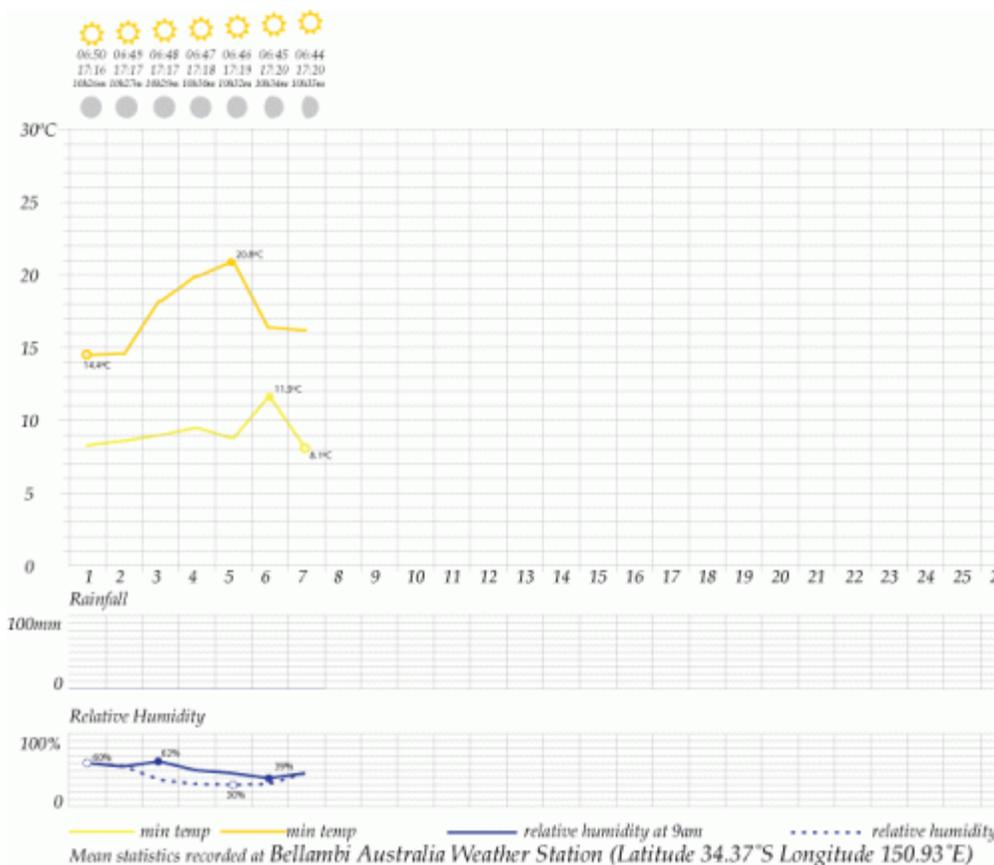
Other markers in life include the 'coming of age' which acknowledges a young person's transition into adulthood such as the Jewish *bar mitzvah* at 13. The age of majority in most

countries is 18 with some legal rights and responsibilities granted incrementally from the ages of 15 to 21. In Japan, a person reaches adulthood at 20 and official ceremonies (*Seijin Shiki*) are held for the year's new adults on the second Monday of January, a national holiday. After reaching adulthood, 'decade birthdays' are conventional milestones. The Chinese 12 astrological signs in a cycle matching the 5 elements makes the 10th year the most significant. Citizens in the Queen Elizabeth II's realm and the United Kingdom overseas territories may apply for a congratulatory card from the monarch, each reaching 100 years of age. (At 105, the centenarian will receive a royal birthday card every year thereafter.)

{DOWNLOAD}

The 'oldest' birthday party I have been to is my grandfather's 90th when he put on a festive banquet. Families and friends travelled from near and far to help him mark the occasion. Now into his 9th decade, he is half-way into his second Chinese astrological cycle. If Hong Kong was still an overseas territory of the United Kingdom, he could apply for a congratulatory note in 7 years time.

{SNIPPETS}



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4 RESPONSES TO "MAJOR COLD: STREAMS AND MARSHES FROZEN"

{NOTABLE COMMENTARIES}

Louise Curham
 August 12th, 2012 at 23:22

IllusAlmanac Illustrated Almanac **1**

Jo Law

August 16th, 2012 at 21:30

It's nice to hear about these grand birthday parties going on around the globe. My father will turn 80 in 2 years time and my mother has big plans, which I am sure he wouldn't approve. With an idiosyncratic sense of humour and a liking for making things up, he once said to be (seemingly seriously) that one's life expectancy is the sum of one's mother's age plus one's father's age divided by 2. Anything beyond that is a bonus.

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