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WHITE JANUARY.

On the heels of the smog comes the snow. Without warning, the blizzard blankets 32 counties; worst hit of all is Lincolnshire, where towns and villages are cut off - even by telephone. Poles are uprooted by high winds and the weight of snow.

Here's one newcomer who takes a very poor view of the world he's arrived in. For the farming community, it's a time of anxiety and hard work; livestock may be stranded in snowdrifts, and even when they're safe, feeding is a problem. If fodder stocks run low, getting fresh supplies over snowbound roads may not be easy.

To add to their troubles, many places find themselves without electricity - a serious matter for the modern farm, where so much equipment is power-driven.

In a few days, we've had a record smog, countrywide snow, and then, (with the thaw) the threat of floods and gales. To cap it all, a very small earthquake in Leicestershire. All we want now is a heat wave.

Heatwave or blizzard, it's all the same to the tough guys - and girls - of the Montreal Polar Bear Club. Their idea of fun is to sweat it out for half an hour in a steam bath - 190 degrees Fahrenheit - and then to run through sub-zero cold for a bath in the St. Lawrence River.

Of course, someone has to chop a hole in the ice first but there are always plenty of bystanders willing to help, if not to join in.

The Polar Bears say it relaxes the muscles - though it looks more like a sort of short cut to rigor mortis. Me, I think I'd rather stay unrelaxed.

And when the blood's just about ready to freeze - back to the old steam bath!