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WEATHER STORIES.

It's half past five in the morning at Leeuwarden in Friesland - and Friesland is right, with 11 degrees of frost! The famous Eleven Towns skating marathon is starting in a heavy snowstorm - 259 skaters with 124 miles ahead of them.

Every few miles the skaters have to leave the ice to get round locks and other obstacles. All along the route, volunteers from the local population have been clearing the course - and with repeated snowfalls covering it up again, that's almost as hard work as the skating.

The leading group reach a check point. Just time for a quick breather - and a spot of cream on a chapped face.

No 280, the Frisian favourite, Van den Berg, won the last race in 1954, but near Dokkum he has to change his skates, and the leaders forge ahead of him.

After eight and three-quarters hours on the ice, the finish is in sight. Five skaters are neck and neck - but to everybody's astonishment they decide to cross the line together! A strange end to a national event - and if there any bookies about, they've got a headache now!

Tradition has it that the Danube's always blue to people in love - but you'd have to be hand over heels in love right now to see it as anything but white. At Vilsbibingen, in Bavaria, icebreakers are called in to deal with the freeze-up, which is piled over 30 feet thick in places.

The big freeze doesn't merely halt the Danube shipping - it's a serious danger to power supplies as well, for Vilsbibingen has an important hydro-electric station. The weight of ice, stretching upstream for 15 miles, threatens to put the station out of action. If the lock gates were to give way under the pressure, the generators would be starved of water.

The tough little ships manage to keep the ice broken up and on the move, and the power station is saved - but sometimes it's a mighty near thing!

At Upton Magna, near Shrewsbury, Farmer J.G. Morgan doesn't care if the Danube freezes or boils, he's got his own problems, like thousands of other farmers. Whatever the weather, livestock have to be kept supplied.

While fodder is brought to the cattle, here are some new arrivals with their feed supply already laid on. It's been a good lambing season for this typical English farm - 186 lambs so far, from 111 ewes.

Hay, there aren't all here.

Help - where's Mum?

With so many mouths to feed, one or two have to be reared on the bottle. Sixty-year-old foreman shepherd William Jones is an old hand at this - but the lambs learn fast, too!