

Mild Christmas to be blown away on Boxing Day

By **Xantha Leatham**

MAKE the most of the mild weather on Christmas Day – it won't last.

By Boxing Day the weather will be turning windier and colder, with Storm Dylan hitting by the new year.

Yesterday Met Office forecaster Greg Dewhurst said: 'It's going to be mild and overcast on Christmas Day morning but rain will move into western parts in the late afternoon and evening. The only place that might see a bit of snow is on the hills in the north of Scotland.'

Temperatures are forecast to reach 12C (54F), a few degrees down on the 15C (59F) recorded in some parts of the country on

CHRISTMAS EVE

North: Mainly cloudy and overcast

Max: 12C (54F)
Min: 7C (45F)

South: Cloudy. Some sunny spells

Max: 11C (52F)
Min: 8C (46F)

CHRISTMAS DAY

North: Mainly cloudy and overcast

Max: 12C (54F)
Min: 3C (37F)

South: Breezier and sunny spells

Max: 11C (52F)
Min: 5C (41F)

BOXING DAY

North: Breezy. Sunshine and showers

Max: 7C (45F)
Min: 3C (37F)

South: Increasingly unsettled and windy

Max: 9C (48F)
Min: 4C (39F)

Christmas Day last year. Boxing Day is expected to be colder with sunshine and showers. 'It will feel cooler compared to this week, with temperatures hovering around

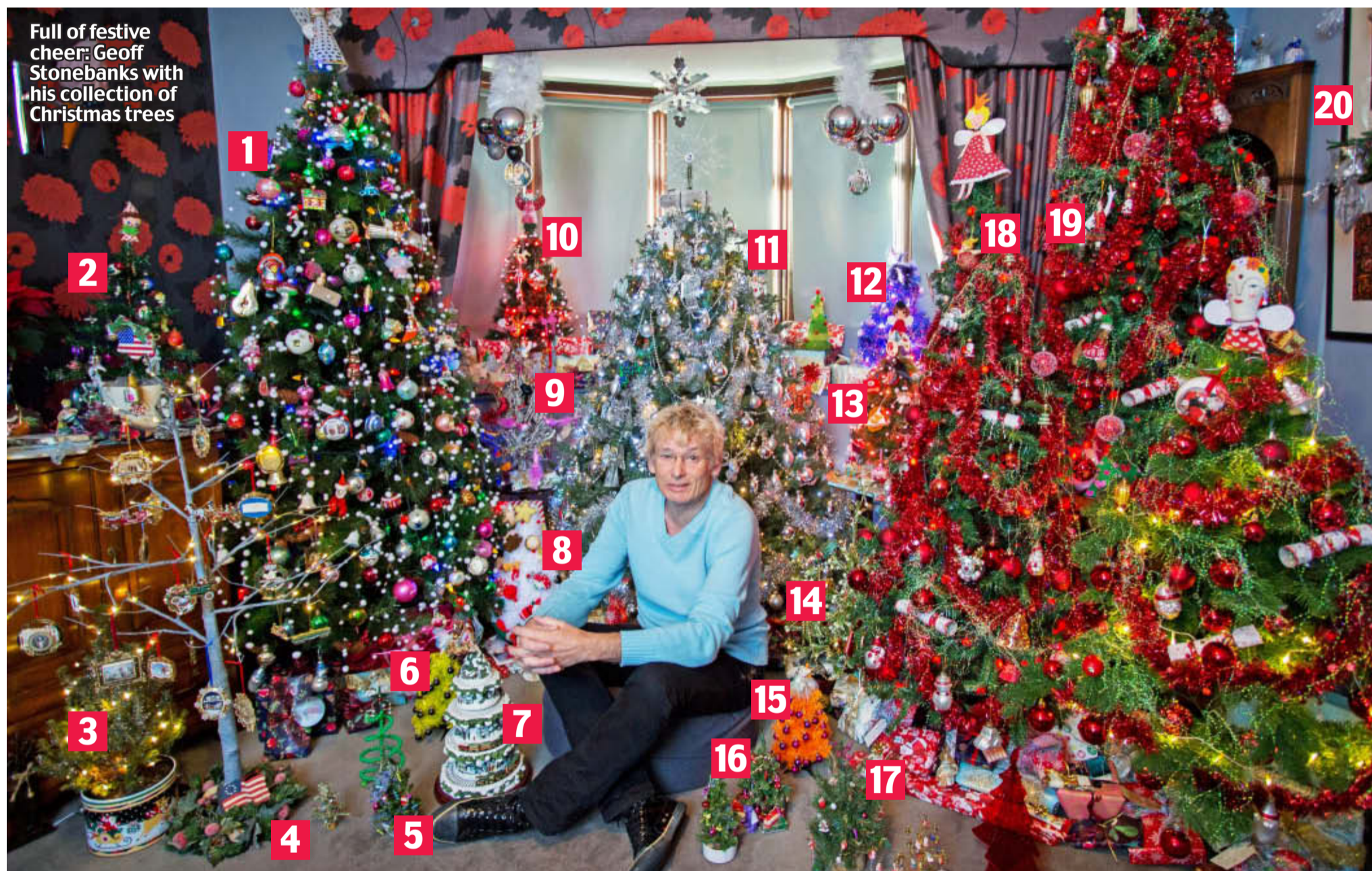
the 7C (45F) mark,' Mr Dewhurst added. This month's mild temperatures have resulted in signs of spring already appearing, according to data from the Woodland

Trust. There have been five sightings of hazel catkins across the country, a flower which usually appears in February.

A string of incidents caused problems yesterday for those trying to get away for Christmas. About 40 flights were cancelled or diverted after a jet left the runway at Bristol Airport while taxiing. None of the 25 passengers were injured.

On the roads an 11-mile tailback was triggered when a lorry carrying a load of beer caught fire on the southbound carriageway of the M40 near Bicester, Oxfordshire.

Delays and cancellations hit several rail operators including South Western Railway which said around 30 services were being axed due to 'sickness among train crew'.



Full of festive cheer: Geoff Stonebanks with his collection of Christmas trees

The Xmas tree addict

By **Rosie Taylor**

PUTTING up the Christmas tree takes most of us an hour or so.

But for Geoff Stonebanks – who has 20 trees and at least £10,000 of decorations – it's a whole week's work.

The 64-year-old retired Royal Mail manager from Seaford, East Sussex, said: 'It's an obsession. I'm very childlike with Christmas. You have to be – it's a fun time.'

His festive addiction began when he was seven and given the job of decorating the pub his parents owned in Oxfordshire. He inherited the decorations when they retired in the mid-1980s and has added to his collection every year.

Mr Stonebanks's other obsession is gardening and he has raised more than £95,000 for charity by

One's not enough for Geoff, so he has 20... and £10,000 of decorations!

opening his beautiful coastal garden, Driftwood, to the public.

Here is a guide to his Christmas tree collection, pictured:

1. THE VINTAGE TREE Covered in glass baubles from the 1940s, 50s and 60s, this one is topped with a fairy bought from Woolworths in the 1960s.

2. THE WOOLWORTHS TREE At 55 years old, this is the oldest and is decorated with the most pre-

cious ornaments. The tree was bought in 1962 and topped with a fairy made for Mr Stonebanks by his grandmother in the late 1950s.

3. THE REAL TREE This is the only natural tree Mr Stonebanks has – he has been growing it in a pot for the past three years.

4. THE WHITE HOUSE TREE This John Lewis tree is decorated with every official White House bauble released annually since 1994.

5. THE AMERICAN TREE Mr Stonebanks bought this mini-tree in Washington DC around 20 years ago while visiting friends.

6. THE YELLOW TREE A novelty tree bought around ten years ago.

7. THE MUSICAL TREE A German tree that features music as well as moving trains and a sleigh.

8. THE KNITTED TREE This one is made entirely from wool and was given to Mr Stonebanks by a woman he met on Facebook.

9. THE BIRD TREE This wooden tree is decorated with bird, butterfly and insect ornaments.

10. THE DOG TREE The dog-themed baubles represent Mr Stonebanks's favourite animal.

11. THE SILVER TREE This is the crowning glory of the collection, decorated with hundreds of silver ornaments and four strings of lights. It takes a day to set it up.

12. THE PURPLE TREE Mr Stonebanks bought this 14 years ago when he moved into his home.

13. THE CUPCAKE TREE The baubles are shaped like cakes and are mainly gifts from friends.

14. THE MISTLETOE TREE This tree is made out of fake mistletoe sprayed gold and green.

15. THE ORANGE TREE A companion to the yellow novelty tree.

16. THE GIFT TREE This was made for Mr Stonebanks 23 years ago by the eight-year-old American niece of his best friend.

17. THE BELGIAN TREE Purchased in Belgium around 15 years ago, it is decorated with tiny baubles.

18 & 19. THE RED TREE This is actually two smaller trees put together, with red ornaments.

20. THE 1960S TREE Another Woolworths tree that was bought for Mr Stonebanks's parents' pub.