



MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT

NEW ZEALAND METEOROLOGICAL SERVICE

AN AIR FROST CHRONOLOGY FOR NEW ZEALAND

Statistics of First and Last
Air Frost Dates, and of Air Frost
Free Duration in New Zealand

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AN AIR FROST CHRONOLOGY FOR NEW ZEALAND

Abstract

Statistics are presented for 166 New Zealand locations of the distributions of:

I date of first frost

II date of last frost

and

III duration of frost free season.

These statistics have been calculated on all available data, and include extremes, selected percentiles, means and standard deviations, and ranges for I, II and III. Also included are the sample size and number of frost free years.

Confidence limits based on normal and distribution-free assumptions are given for means, selected percentiles, and the standard deviations.

Generalised maps of extreme early and extreme late frost are presented. These maps demonstrate the steep spatial gradients which can exist in the data, and the extreme values inland. A map of frost free years is presented, which illustrates the relatively frost free coastal margins. Evidence exists in these maps for significant local effects, in the larger river valleys and about the lakes of the South Island, about Cook Strait and in the Manawatu Gorge, and east of even quite minor ranges.

The variability of spatial differences of first and last frost dates is shown to be of the order of weeks on climate sub-grid scales. An upper bound for this variability is estimated.

The distribution of extreme levels, variability, skewness and shape of the three distribution types over New Zealand is discussed. The general applicability of the normal distribution is shown, but it is demonstrated that various distinctly non-gaussian aspects are present, especially inland in the frost dates and about the coast in the frost free duration.

Statistically significant relationships are found between frost date statistics and mean annual temperature and mean annual range, and the regional variation of these relationships discussed. The implications for rational mapping of frost date statistics are considered.

1. Introduction

This publication presents statistics relating to:

- I date of first air frost
- II date of last air frost
- III duration of air frost-free season

for New Zealand.

The frosts discussed here are air frosts, defined as occasions when the temperature in a standard meteorological screen 1.3 metres above a level grass surface, falls below 0° Celsius. Records of ground frost (as measured by grass minimum thermometers) are also kept by the New Zealand Meteorological Service, but these are not considered in this publication.

In calculating these statistics, the number of days from the beginning of the year was used in I and II. The duration of the frost-free season III is defined as the number of days between the last frost of one year and the first frost of the following year.

As this is a first publication concerning frost dates the opportunity has been taken to analyse useful historical records from closed climatological stations as well as current records.

In general, the variability both in space and with time of frost is considerable. Frost occurs as a result of a sequence of processes. While it is difficult to predict frost or to determine the magnitude of the various changes the general factors involved are well known. These are firstly the advection of cold air over the land, in New Zealand generally from the southerly quarter, and the further cooling of the air close to the surface as a result of radiational heat loss from the surface at night. This cooling will be most intense in clear, calm conditions.

Topographic variations are well known influences of frost occurrence. These variations have effects through:-

- a) radiation balance
- b) effects on cloud distribution
- c) effects on wind distribution
- d) flow and ponding effects on cold air drainage. *

* A full discussion of this problem may be found in Geiger (1965).

On a larger scale, general influences of some importance include:

- the moderating effect on temperatures of the sea in coastal areas;
- the general decrease of temperature with altitude;
- the orientation and slope of the ground;
- the nature and texture of the soil and surface cover;
- the amount of moisture in the lower layers of the atmosphere and the level of soil moisture;
- and finally the great variability induced both spatially and temporarily in the day to day weather produced by synoptic disturbances.

About the coast the sea/land breeze regime is likely to be important, while inland the effects of mountain/valley wind systems, with their complicated dependence on thermal effects and synoptic variation may be expected to be important influences affecting frostiness.

2. The Statistics

The main statistics tabulated are the extremes (maximum, minimum), selected percentiles and the mean, standard deviation and extreme range; pages 41 - 52.

The station tables are listed in numerical order according to station number within the sections A through I. (See the Station location key, map 1). An alphabetical list of stations names with associated page numbers is given on pages 5 - 6. The latitude and longitude of each station are included in the table headings, and its location is approximately given by the station number. The first two digits of the five specify the last digit of the numbers of degrees South and East. The next two digits give the approximate position, in tenths of one degree South and East respectively, within the "square". The last digit relates to a particular site and is for recording purposes. Thus FOXTON F05421 is approximately 40.4 South, 175.2 East, as indicated in map 1. Also given in the station table headings is the site elevation, in metres.

At the right hand of the tables are two columns headed N and n. The first variate, N gives the length of data period. The second, n, gives the number of frost free years in the years of full record.

In the body of the table are presented the percentiles (10, 25, 50, 75, 90 percent) the extremes, means and standard deviations, and also the extreme range.

The listed values have been calculated as follows: -

- i) mean : $M = (\Sigma D)/N$
- ii) standard deviation : $SD = \sqrt{(\Sigma D^2 - NM^2)/(N-1)}$

where D is either the date expressed as a number of days from the beginning of the current year, or the duration of the frost free season in days, and N is the number of observations of the quantities concerned.

- iii) percentiles : the k'th percentile
 $= k(N + 1)/100$ 'th observation

after the observations have been ranked from smallest to greatest.

Where $k(N + 1)/100$ was fractional the percentile was taken as the average of the value of the sum of the observations whose ordinal numbers lie about $k(N+1)/100$. Because of the sampling fluctuations no more refined method was thought justified.

In these calculations due allowance was made for leap years, and the length of the frost free season was taken as:

$$D = D_{FN+1} - D_{LN} + 364, \text{ where}$$

D_{FN+1} is the number of days into year N + 1

of the first frost, and D_{LN} is the number of days into year N of the last frost.

In some years in some areas no air frost occurred, notably in Westland and Northland. The frost-free period then includes the whole year. In these cases no mean, standard deviation or range was calculated for the dates of first and last frost. The frost-free period taken then is the natural one of complete length in time from last frost to the next frost. Some of these frost-free period statistics are consequently extremely large.

In the calculation of the percentile values for records with frost-free years, N was still taken as the number of years of record. Attaching some probability to the non frosty year in this manner avoids bias in the long term expected number of air frosts.

3. Errors

The statistics relate to threshold type events. Because of the large variations which may occur in meteorological data over quite short time and space

scales these threshold statistics may be expected to reflect this rather sensitively. An estimate of an upper bound to the variation in the date statistics is given in 4.

Other mechanical errors may arise in recording the observations and in converting a temperature threshold occurrence date into a number of days from the beginning of the year, etc.

A pilot study showed that an error rate of about 2% existed in finding the actual temperature threshold occurrence, as recorded, and the magnitude of this error was generally small (~ 10 days). The overall effect on the calculated sample statistics was negligible.

All conversions of dates into numbers of days from the beginning of the year have been checked.

4. A Comparison of Temporal and Short Scale Spatial Variability

In analysing this data set, a special study was made of those few climate records which existed contemporaneously within an area small by comparison with the general separation of stations in the climatological network.

At a given station A, the date of first/last frost in a given year was compared with the date of first/last frost at a neighbouring station B. The difference is a measure of the spatial variability in first/last frost dates. These differences are referred to as the Space Differences (Sp D). Also the date of first/last frost at each station can be compared with the corresponding date for the same station in the following year. These differences are referred to as the Time Differences (Ti D).

Statistics of Sp D and Ti D are given in Table 1; the mean differences correspond to systematic effects in time or space, and the dispersion about the mean differences correspond to the time variation about these mean differences. In particular, the standard deviation of the space differences can be taken as a measure of the time variation of the local space differences of the first or last frost dates.

From these tables it is seen that

- a) the mean space differences are considerably larger than the mean time differences, which are generally small.
- b) however, the mean space difference variability is rarely less than two weeks and may be as much as five weeks or more.

Table 1a: Summary of Distribution Characteristics :
First Frost Dates.

| | | Mean Sp D | Standard Deviation of Sp D | n | Mean Ti D | Standard Deviation of Ti D | n |
|----|---|--------------|----------------------------------|----|--------------|----------------------------------|----------|
| 1. | Levin -Waitarere | 31 | 24 | 11 | 1 3 | 31 14 | 10 10 |
| 2. | Masterton Airport -Waingawa | 14 | 32 | 7 | 1 1 | 24 51 | 6 6 |
| 3. | Nelson -Nelson Airport | 43 | 36 | 8 | 2 5 | 29 29 | 7 7 |
| 4. | Christchurch Airport -Wigram | 4 | 11 | 15 | 2 0 | 25 24 | 21 30 |
| | Wigram -Christchurch | 3 | 15 | 31 | 0 0 | 24 22 | 30 37 |
| | Christchurch Airport -Christchurch | 4 | 17 | 22 | 2 0 | 25 22 | 21 37 |
| 5. | Timaru -Timaru Airport | 14 | 18 | 8 | 2 1 | 27 24 | 7 7 |
| 6. | Gore -East Gore | 13 | 28 | 23 | 0 0 | 21 39 | 22 22 |
| 7. | Invercargill 1 -Invercargill 2 | 9 | 12 | 11 | 0 1 | 14 18 | 10 17 |
| | Invercargill 2 -Invercargill Airport | 41 | 50 | 9 | 1 0 | 18 53 | 17 26 |
| | Invercargill 1 -Invercargill Airport | 54 | 56 | 3 | 0 0 | 14 53 | 10 26 |

Mean
Sp D - Magnitude of mean of space differences of first frost, where Sp D is date of first frost at station A - date of first frost at neighbouring station B, in same year.

Mean
Ti D - Magnitude of mean of time differences of first frosts, where Ti D is date of first frost at station A in year - date of first frost at same station A in preceding year.

n - Sample size.

Table 1b: Summary of Distribution Characteristics :
Last Frost Dates.

| | | Mean Sp D | Standard Deviation of Sp D | n | Mean Ti D | Standard Deviation of Ti D | n |
|----|--|--------------|----------------------------------|----|--------------|----------------------------------|----------|
| 1. | Levin -Waitarere | 46 | 31 | 11 | 1 3 | 34 39 | 10 10 |
| 2. | Masterton Airport -Waingawa | 10 | 17 | 6 | 19 2 | 24 31 | 4 6 |
| 3. | Nelson -Nelson Airport | 44 | 34 | 8 | 4 0 | 52 17 | 7 7 |
| 4. | Christchurch Airport -Wigram | 4 | 27 | 15 | 1 4 | 23 31 | 21 30 |
| | Wigram -Christchurch | 7 | 32 | 30 | 4 2 | 31 37 | 30 37 |
| | Christchurch Airport -Christchurch | 3 | 25 | 22 | 1 2 | 23 37 | 21 37 |
| 5. | Timaru -Timaru Airport | 13 | 23 | 8 | 4 5 | 23 44 | 7 7 |
| 6. | Gore -East Gore | 1 | 25 | 22 | 1 1 | 39 35 | 21 21 |
| 7. | Invercargill 1 -Invercargill 2 | 14 | 21 | 11 | 1 0 | 32 25 | 10 17 |
| | Invercargill 2 - Invercargill Airport | 25 | 25 | 9 | 0 1 | 25 46 | 17 8 |
| | Invercargill 1 -Invercargill Airport | 9 | 38 | 3 | 1 1 | 32 46 | 10 8 |

- | | |
|--------------|---|
| Mean Sp D | - Magnitude of mean of space differences of last frost, where Sp D is date of last frost at station A - date of last frost at neighbouring station B, in same year. |
| Mean Ti D | - Magnitude of mean of time differences of last frost, where Ti D is date of last frost, at station A in year - date of last frost at same station A in preceding year. |
| n | - Sample size. |

Even in the case of Christchurch, where there is a relatively flat and uniform topography compared with much of New Zealand, the dispersion of the differences of dates of first/last frost is quite considerable being about two to four weeks.

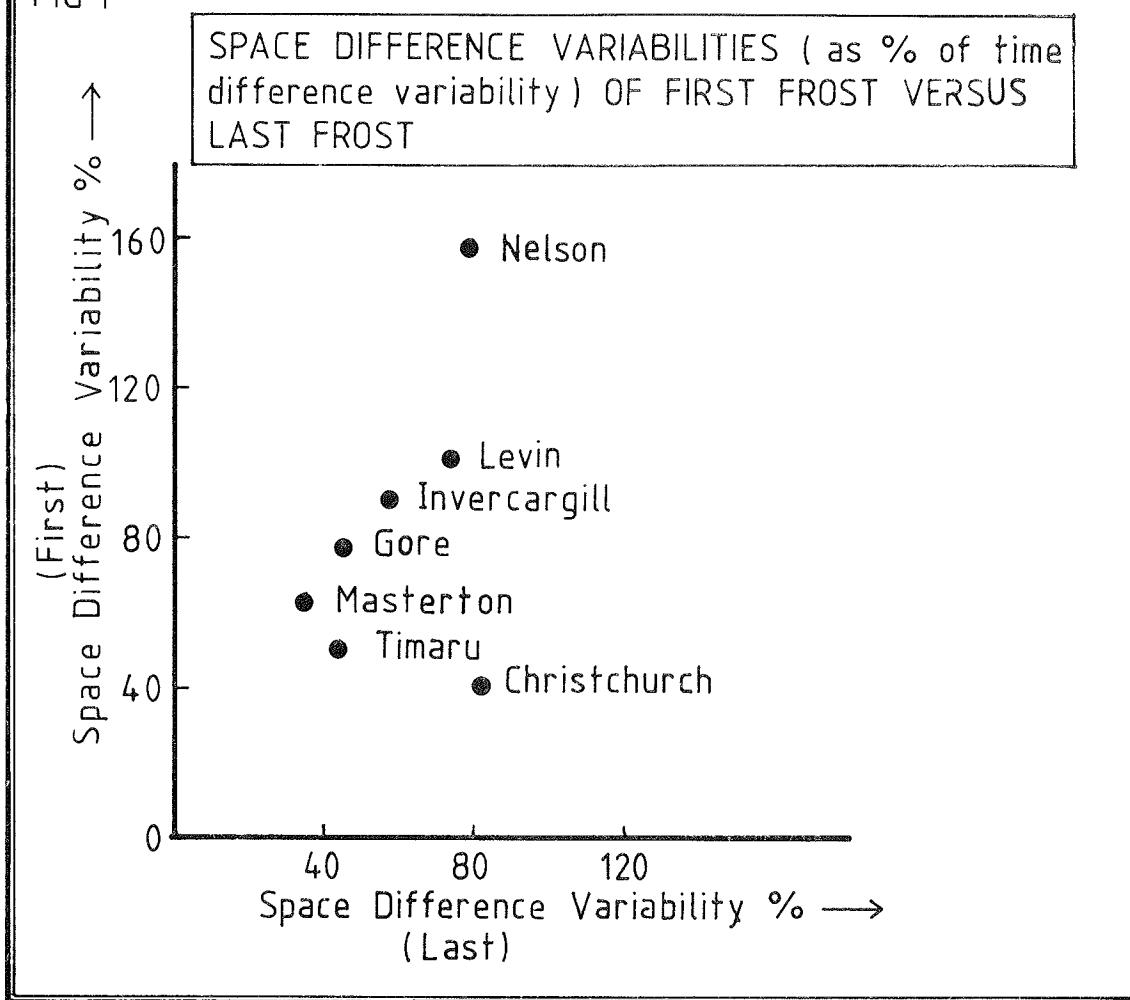
A pooled estimate of the space and time difference variabilities was formed weighting each variance by the appropriate number of observations. The pooled estimates of variability in the space and time differences were compared, as in Table 2 and Figure 1.

- a) There is a moderate correlation between the two sets of percentages (first, last) when Christchurch is excluded.
- b) The pooled time variability of the space differences is generally smaller than that of the pooled time differences but can be greater, especially in sheltered coastal locations, where the spatial variation of frost occurrence may be very great.

Table 2: Space Difference Variability as Percentage of Time Difference Variability

| | <u>First Frost</u> | <u>Last Frost</u> |
|--------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| Levin | 101 | 73 |
| Masterton | 63 | 35 |
| Nelson | 157 | 79 |
| Christchurch | 41 | 82 |
| Timaru | 50 | 44 |
| Gore | 77 | 45 |
| Invercargill | 90 | 57 |

FIG 1



The preceding analysis assumes no random or systematic error in the instrumental records of temperature. A systematic error will influence the mean differences, and a small random error will influence the standard errors of the space differences.

Clearly we can partition the time variability of the space differences of first or last frost σ^2 say into a portion σ_i^2 due to random instrumental error and σ_r^2 a portion due to real variability so that:

$$\sigma^2 = \sigma_i^2 + \sigma_r^2$$

if uncorrelated.

The quantity σ^2 which we can measure and is discussed in Table 1, appears then as an upper bound for both quantities σ_i^2 or σ_r^2

5. Extreme Values

Maps 2 and 3 present information about the extreme dates for first and last frost occurrence in New Zealand. The extremes are from all available records.

These maps are highly generalised and only a broad indication of frost date occurrence may be taken from them. They cannot provide highly reliable point estimates. The equal date contours are, however, strongly correlated with the equal date contours for the various percentiles of extreme frost occurrence.

Stations with at least one frost free year are shown in Map 4. For each such station the number of frost free years is shown as a fraction of the total number of years of record. At several places the locations of sites changed and in this case both the records before and after the site change are shown.

A number of interesting features are apparent from these maps. In summary, they are: -

- i) A large area of extreme early first frost and extreme late last frost in the Central North Island, with lobes running northeast towards East Cape and north-northwest to Coromandel; and an even larger region in the interior South Island. A smaller extreme exists in inland Wairarapa, in both first and last frost dates. A further local extreme exists inland from Waipoua in Northland.
- ii) Frost free years occur along the coastal margins from Haast north on the western coast and from Banks Peninsula north on the east coasts. In general Northland and Westland are the main frost free areas. Local maxima of frost free years occur about Cook Strait and in the Manawatu Gorge, where strong winds are common.
- iii) In the major river valleys east of the South Island main divide and about the Southern Lakes there is evidence of important local effects, both acting to produce later first frosts and earlier last frosts. The influences of strong katabatic flows, which may be expected to give some mixing, and heat store effects from the presence of neighboring large bodies of water are likely to be important.

6. Variability

The standard deviations of dates of first and last frost, and of frost free duration, were mapped over New Zealand. There was quite wide variation spatially so the following discussion is given in terms of a range of weeks; contouring of the unsmoothed variabilities is not suggested.

Much of the variability in first and last frost dates about the coasts lies within the range 2-4 weeks where a well defined frost year occurs. In the central North Island the first frost dates become more variable, lying within the range 5-7 weeks about the Volcanic Plateau. Similar increases in variability are found inland in the South Island, where it is typically in the range 4-5 weeks in inland Canterbury and Southland. A local minimum appears about Central Otago, where the first frost variability is of the order of 2-4 weeks.

The last frost date variabilities are typically of 3-4½ weeks in inland areas, in both islands.

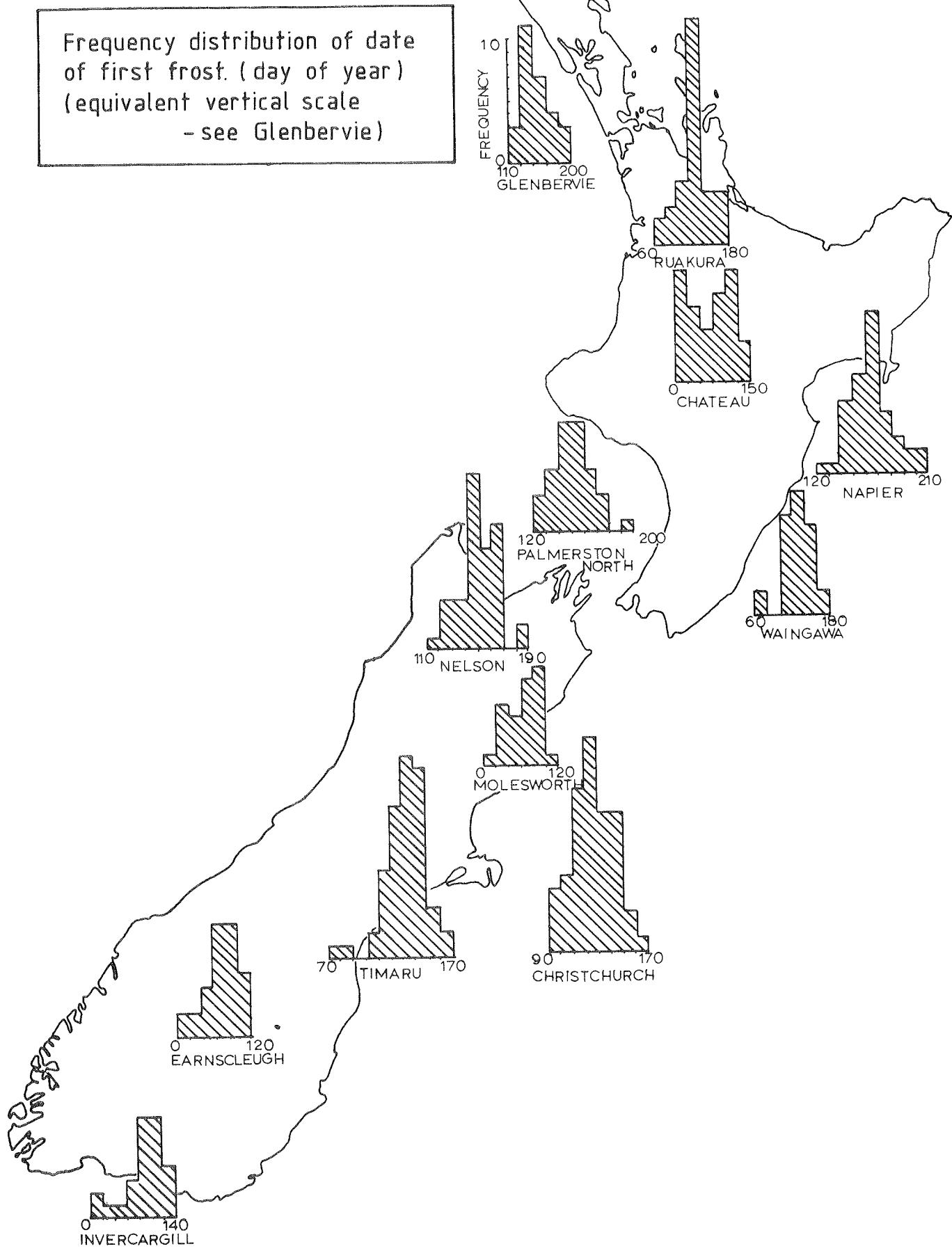
A much greater spatial variation is evident in the frost free durations. Inland, where there is generally a well defined frosty period every year everywhere in New Zealand, it is typically from 20-50 days. Near or on the coasts, however, where there may be frost free years, there is wide spatial variation possible in these frost free variabilities. 15 to 40 days is quite typical in coastal Canterbury, Otago and Southland, and also about Cook Strait. About Northland, Auckland and Westland however, the range is more typically 10-400 days. About Fiordland, the east coast of the North Island and Bay of Plenty, and the Manawatu it is intermediate being more of the order of 20-150 days.

7. Distributional Form

An examination was made of the histograms of first and last frost date for all the longer records (25 years or more). Most of these distributions can be fitted quite closely by a normal distribution but the following characteristics of the data were noted.

- i) Some of the distributions appear quite skew. A few appear almost uniform, bimodal or even polymodal. The first and last frost date distributions tend to be merely skewed about the coasts, but as one goes inland and to high levels not only does skewness usually increase but also the other non-gaussian features, such as bimodality appear.

FIG 2



- ii) The duration of frost-free season tended to be most skew in the less frost prone areas (Northland, Auckland and Westland) and in general, about the coastal margins, although some quite skew distributions appear in the central North Island and east of the Southern Alps.

Figures 2-4 present a typical selection of histograms of each of the three parameters, and illustrate some of the above points.

In frost risk studies one is particularly interested in the more extreme "outside" percentiles, for example the 10% date of first frost and the 90% date of last frost. Overseas, the assumption is often made that the dates are normally distributed. (Waggoner, 1968). While this is also generally true in New Zealand (in the overall mean squared discrepancy sense for example) this criterion may be insensitive to departures concentrated near the tails of the distribution. Differences of up to 3 weeks can separate the 10 percentile dates of first frost calculated from the empirical distribution function and the normal distribution function, even when the overall χ^2 is not significant. (Goulter and Hurnard, 1979).

To provide a guide to the normality of the data, sensitive to departures from normality in the more extreme values, Table 3 should be consulted. This gives the discrepancies DIS between empirical and gaussian estimates of the 10 and 90 percentile values for each of the distribution types (for locations where frosts occur every year).

Gaussian estimates of the 10 and 90 percentile values were derived using the sample mean and standard deviation to estimate the population moments.

In the frost dates, about 19% of all these values equal or exceed 1 week; about 9% equal or exceed 10 days; and about 3% equal or exceed 15 days. Most of the more extreme deviations are to be found inland; of the 95 locations 27 have at least one deviation in excess of 10 days.

In the frost free durations many large deviations from normality occur inland but in general the greatest deviations occur about the coasts where some years may be frost free.

FIG 3

Frequency distributions of date of last frost. (day of year)
 (equivalent vertical scale
 - see Glenbervie)

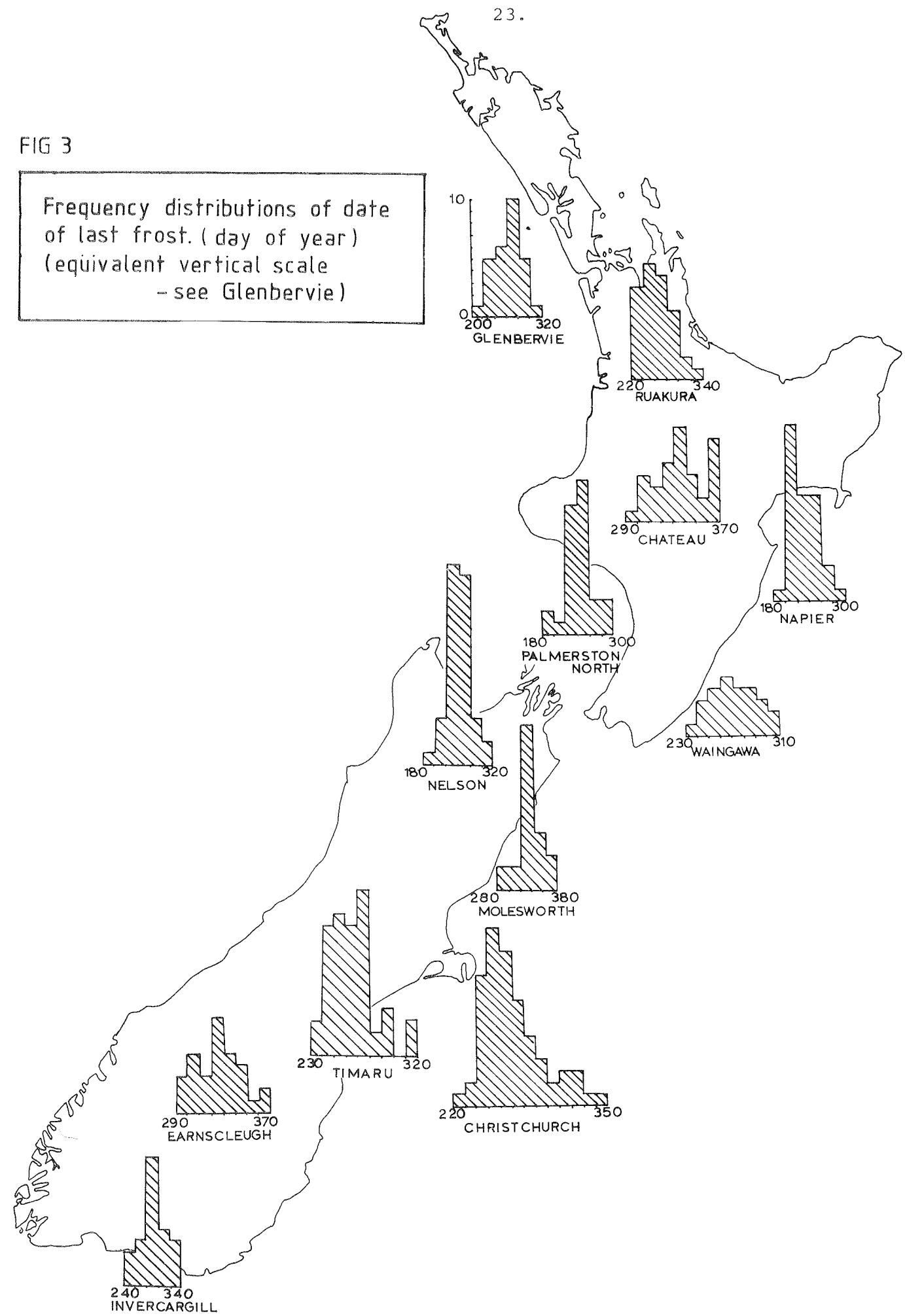


FIG 4

Frequency distributions of length
of frost-free period (days)
(equivalent vertical scale
- see Glenbervie)

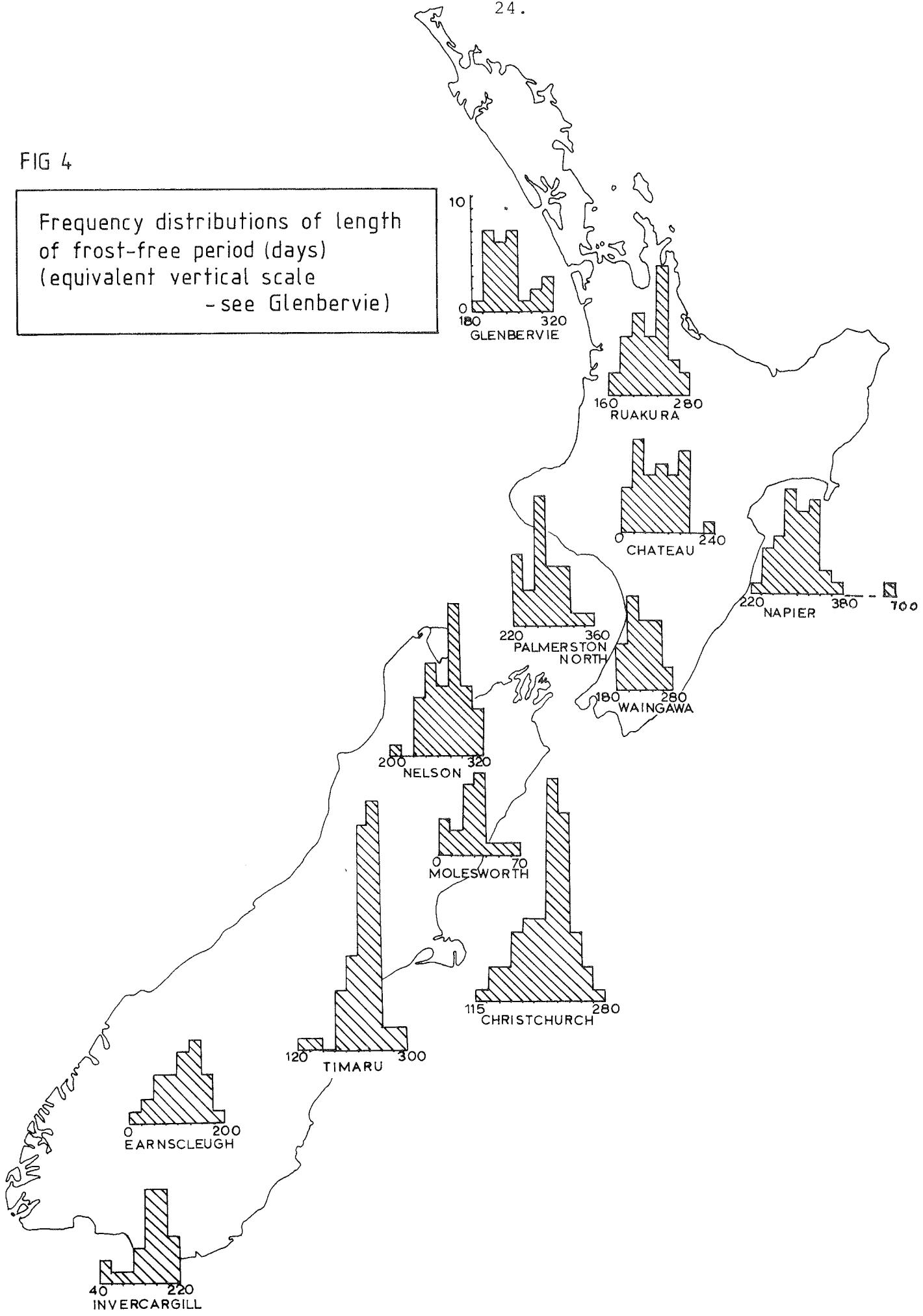


Table 3: Discrepancies from Normal of Empirical 10 and 90 Percentiles
(Discrepancy DIS = Observed - Expected, in days)

| <u>LOCATION</u> | <u>Percentiles</u> | <u>FIRST</u> | | <u>LAST</u> | | <u>FROST FREE DURATION</u> | |
|------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------|-----------|-------------|-----------|----------------------------|-----------|
| | | <u>10</u> | <u>90</u> | <u>10</u> | <u>90</u> | <u>10</u> | <u>90</u> |
| Dargaville | | -2.6 | 2.6 | -10.2 | -3.8 | -4.0 | 4.0 |
| Glenbervie | | -1.0 | 9.1 | -10.4 | 2.4 | 5.3 | 19.7 |
| Riverhead | | 0.6 | -0.6 | 7.3 | 5.7 | -0.2 | 1.2 |
| Whenuapai | | -0.6 | 4.6 | 6.4 | -3.4 | 7.1 | 5.9 |
| Oratia | | -4.6 | 8.6 | -9.6 | 4.6 | 5.8 | 10.2 |
| Waihi | | -1.0 | -1.0 | -1.2 | 6.2 | -3.3 | 15.3 |
| Te Aroha | | 1.7 | -3.7 | 0.8 | 3.2 | -7.2 | 1.2 |
| Rotoheu | | 1.6 | -0.6 | 1.0 | 0.0 | -6.6 | -1.4 |
| Kawerau | | -1.0 | 2.1 | -3.9 | 4.9 | 0.4 | 6.6 |
| Rotorua | | -1.3 | -4.7 | 3.4 | 7.6 | -8.5 | 4.5 |
| Whakarewarewa | | -0.4 | 2.4 | 5.0 | 8.1 | -11.2 | -1.8 |
| Waiotapu | | -4.6 | 2.6 | -0.9 | 9.9 | -6.6 | 3.6 |
| Kaingaroa | | -9.6 | -0.4 | 5.1 | -0.1 | -12.6 | -4.4 |
| Wairapukao | | -4.9 | -0.1 | -4.7 | 1.7 | 7.0 | 12.0 |
| Taupo | | -8.3 | 4.3 | 0.4 | 0.6 | -5.9 | 6.9 |
| Minginui | | -6.6 | 2.6 | -6.4 | 4.4 | -16.3 | 6.3 |
| Otara | | -4.6 | -5.4 | -4.2 | 5.2 | -4.5 | 1.5 |
| Maramarua | | 2.4 | 0.6 | 6.4 | 1.6 | 2.4 | -0.4 |
| Ruakura | | -9.7 | 4.7 | 1.1 | 2.9 | 0.1 | 6.9 |
| Whatawhata | | -2.4 | 1.4 | 6.0 | 8.0 | -10.3 | -8.7 |
| Rukuhia | | 5.4 | -7.4 | -2.0 | -2.0 | 2.4 | 17.6 |
| Arapuni | | 2.0 | 3.0 | -1.0 | 5.0 | -9.9 | -3.1 |
| Pureora | | -16.0 | -1.0 | -11.5 | 0.4 | -3.2 | -4.8 |
| Taumarunui | | -1.2 | 0.2 | 0.3 | 1.7 | -4.7 | -1.3 |
| Te Wera | | -2.2 | -2.8 | -8.2 | -4.8 | 6.8 | 7.2 |
| Chateau | | -2.5 | -4.5 | -4.3 | 1.3 | -6.0 | 9.0 |
| Pahiatua | | -1.3 | -1.6 | 1.6 | 5.4 | -20.3 | -10.7 |
| Bagshot | | 1.8 | 3.2 | -7.9 | 1.9 | -8.0 | 4.0 |
| Masterton | | -2.9 | 2.9 | -6.9 | 0.9 | 4.7 | 11.3 |
| Waingawa | | -8.4 | 3.4 | -1.3 | 5.3 | 1.1 | 6.9 |
| Waipukurau | | -4.0 | -1.9 | 5.8 | -0.8 | -3.9 | 1.9 |
| Dannevirke | | 0.6 | 2.4 | -7.9 | 0.9 | 0.1 | 4.9 |
| Ngaumu | | -7.0 | 3.0 | -0.4 | 4.4 | -1.6 | 7.6 |
| Gisborne | | 8.0 | -1.0 | 2.8 | 3.2 | 1.3 | -11.3 |
| Hastings | | -5.9 | 4.9 | 1.7 | 2.3 | -1.6 | -1.4 |
| Havelock North | | -5.9 | -2.1 | 6.6 | 7.4 | -8.6 | 1.4 |
| Gwavas | | -13.7 | 0.7 | -2.2 | 10.2 | -7.6 | -0.4 |
| Paraparaumu | | 1.7 | 3.3 | 2.4 | -5.4 | 7.4 | -4.4 |
| Flockhouse, Bulls | | 6.7 | -15.7 | 11.8 | -11.8 | -66.0 | -20.0 |
| Tangimoana | | -1.0 | -8.0 | -7.0 | -1.0 | -8.2 | 9.2 |
| Palmerston North | | 0.6 | -1.6 | 2.6 | 6.4 | -0.5 | 2.4 |
| Mangahao Hydro | | 0.1 | -1.1 | -2.7 | 3.7 | 0.1 | 6.9 |
| Palmerston North Boys' High School | | -4.7 | -4.3 | 2.0 | 0.0 | 1.5 | 9.5 |
| Otaki | | -3.4 | 2.4 | 5.7 | 0.3 | 5.7 | 13.3 |
| Karioi | | -10.4 | 0.4 | -0.2 | 8.2 | -2.5 | -6.5 |
| Hiwi, Taihape | | 12.3 | -13.3 | 0.4 | 3.6 | 13.0 | -4.0 |

continued over

Table 3: Discrepancies from Normal of Empirical 10 and 90 Percentiles
 (Discrepancy DIS = Observed - Expected, in days)

| <u>LOCATION</u> | <u>Percentiles</u> | <u>FIRST</u> | | <u>LAST</u> | | <u>FROST FREE DURATION</u> | |
|----------------------|--------------------|--------------|-----------|-------------|-----------|----------------------------|-----------|
| | | <u>10</u> | <u>90</u> | <u>10</u> | <u>90</u> | <u>10</u> | <u>90</u> |
| Hokitika | 0.7 | 0.3 | 1.7 | 3.3 | -4.5 | 3.4 | |
| Milford Sound | -0.6 | 7.6 | 0.0 | 3.0 | -2.4 | 7.4 | |
| Appleby | -1.7 | -1.3 | 1.0 | 3.0 | -1.9 | -2.1 | |
| Nelson Airfield | 2.7 | 0.3 | 1.0 | 1.0 | -3.6 | 4.6 | |
| Nelson | 4.1 | -6.1 | 5.4 | 1.6 | -2.2 | -4.8 | |
| Woodbourne | -16.0 | -3.0 | -3.0 | 2.0 | -10.9 | -2.1 | |
| Waihopai | 2.3 | -1.3 | 0.8 | 1.2 | 9.0 | 0.0 | |
| Hanmer | -16.7 | -8.3 | 5.6 | -2.6 | -11.3 | 8.3 | |
| Hanmer | -11.7 | -6.3 | -3.0 | -2.0 | -21.3 | -0.7 | |
| Molesworth | -5.2 | -6.8 | 1.1 | 4.9 | -6.3 | -5.7 | |
| Balmoral Plantation | -11.6 | -4.4 | 2.6 | 12.4 | -10.3 | 0.3 | |
| Hermitage | -14.2 | -2.8 | -1.3 | 2.3 | -9.9 | 6.9 | |
| Lake Coleridge | -3.2 | -2.8 | 1.6 | 0.4 | -0.9 | 0.9 | |
| Rudstone, Methven | 5.1 | -13.1 | -0.9 | 3.9 | -1.6 | -0.4 | |
| Highbank | -1.9 | 4.9 | -1.4 | -5.6 | 7.7 | 2.3 | |
| Winchmore | 0.8 | -0.8 | -2.0 | 2.0 | -4.7 | 10.7 | |
| Ashburton | -6.7 | 4.7 | -5.4 | -0.6 | -11.2 | 3.2 | |
| Ashley State Forest | -1.3 | 1.3 | 6.1 | 9.9 | -11.5 | 5.4 | |
| Darfield | -3.2 | 0.2 | -5.3 | 1.3 | -2.0 | 0.0 | |
| Eyrewell | -4.6 | -2.4 | 2.1 | 9.9 | -5.4 | -3.6 | |
| Christchurch Airport | -8.9 | -1.1 | 0.8 | 2.2 | -7.9 | 3.9 | |
| Wigram | -3.2 | -1.8 | 3.6 | 6.4 | -1.5 | -1.6 | |
| Christchurch | -1.4 | -0.6 | 3.4 | 7.6 | -7.2 | -5.8 | |
| Lincoln | 0.3 | -4.3 | -1.2 | 0.2 | -7.0 | -5.0 | |
| Lake Tekapo | -19.9 | -8.1 | -2.3 | 7.3 | -37.6 | -13.4 | |
| Adair | 0.0 | 1.0 | 0.1 | 5.9 | -11.2 | -2.8 | |
| Timaru | 1.6 | -2.6 | 2.4 | 0.6 | 0.7 | -8.7 | |
| Waimate | 3.8 | 1.2 | 7.6 | -1.6 | 3.1 | 1.9 | |
| Tara Hills | -21.2 | -1.8 | -8.2 | 2.2 | -10.3 | -7.7 | |
| Naseby | 5.7 | 11.3 | 2.3 | -2.3 | 0.4 | 5.6 | |
| Waipiata | -4.2 | 5.2 | -3.4 | 5.4 | -7.0 | 3.0 | |
| Taieri | -5.6 | -2.4 | -0.3 | 6.3 | -9.6 | -5.4 | |
| Dunedin | 5.8 | 10.2 | -1.9 | -1.1 | -2.3 | 11.3 | |
| Dunedin | -5.7 | 3.7 | -19.7 | 4.7 | -10.3 | 13.3 | |
| Queenstown | -6.9 | -3.1 | 1.7 | -0.7 | -5.2 | -1.8 | |
| Mid-Dome | -19.5 | -4.5 | -1.4 | 6.4 | -24.5 | -5.5 | |
| Cromwell | -5.0 | 3.0 | 1.6 | 10.4 | 2.4 | 1.6 | |
| Ophir | -9.5 | 0.4 | 0.4 | 4.6 | -1.9 | 5.9 | |
| Earnscleugh | -18.0 | -1.0 | -5.6 | 5.6 | -19.3 | -0.7 | |
| Alexandra | -5.7 | -1.3 | 0.8 | 7.2 | 1.3 | 6.7 | |
| Manorburn | 2.5 | 6.4 | -2.7 | -0.3 | -1.9 | 9.9 | |
| Roxburgh | 9.0 | -10.0 | -4.2 | 7.2 | 15.0 | -7.0 | |
| Moa Flat | -5.3 | -1.7 | -5.2 | 12.2 | -10.3 | -3.7 | |
| Tapanui | 12.1 | -11.1 | -3.4 | 0.4 | -6.4 | 4.4 | |
| Otautau | -11.6 | -2.4 | -10.3 | -0.7 | -28.7 | -10.3 | |
| Gore | -5.0 | -3.0 | -2.9 | 3.9 | -8.5 | -0.6 | |
| East Gore | -16.5 | -5.6 | -1.0 | 2.0 | -4.5 | -11.5 | |
| Invercargill | 0.8 | 3.2 | -2.3 | 1.3 | -8.2 | -8.8 | |
| Invercargill Airport | -20.3 | -4.7 | -7.2 | 4.2 | -18.5 | -14.5 | |

8. Confidence Limits

8.1 The Normal Case

As has been demonstrated in 7, the majority of the distributions can be taken as nearly gaussian. For these distributions, confidence limits at the 60 and 90% levels are presented in Table 4 for the mean, standard deviation and percentiles. (See for example: Brooks and Carruthers, 1953.)

For the non-normal distributions, the percentiles give a more adequate representation of the distribution and non-parametric confidence levels which utilise some of the calculated sample percentiles as confidence limits, are presented in Table 5 for guidance.

As a practical guide to whether a distribution can be considered normal or not, it is suggested that the 10 and 90 percentiles as given in the tables be compared with the expressions:

$$\text{and } x'_{10} = \bar{x} - 1.285 \times \sigma$$

$$x'_{90} = \bar{x} + 1.285 \times \sigma$$

respectively. These are the exact expressions for normally distributed data. (\bar{x} and σ are the sample mean and standard deviation respectively; x'_{10} and x'_{90} are the 10 and 90 percentiles values in a 'normal' sample).

If the discrepancy $DIS = x - x'$ for either the 10 or 90 percentiles exceeds 1 week it is suggested that for a quick guide, Table 5 be used. If both DIS values are numerically smaller than 1 week Table 4 should be used.

These discrepancies from normal are given in Table 3 for the longer period samples ($n > 20$ years).

8.2 Example of Use and Interpretation of Tables

Tabulated in Table 4, as a function of sample size n , (in columns) and confidence level (%) (in rows) are multiplicative factors appropriate to finding confidence limits for the relevant population parameters, either for the mean in A or the standard deviation in B. Multiplication of the sample standard deviation by the factors in A and addition to the sample mean gives the indicated confidence interval for the population mean.

Multiplication of the sample standard deviation by the factors in B simply gives the indicated upper and lower confidence limits.

Multiplication of the sample standard deviation by the factors in C gives the one standard deviation upper and lower limits from the indicated percentiles.

EXAMPLE

To derive 90% confidence limits for the population mean, standard deviation and percentiles for Otara date of first frost.

Since both DIS values -4.6, -5.4 are less in magnitude than 1 week, we use Table 4A. For the population mean μ of the Otara date of first frost, we enter the tables at $n = 25$ (nearest the sample size $n = 24$ for Otara) and read .35. Thus with sample mean date of first frost = 6 June and standard deviation of date of first frost = 19. Using (6 June = 157th day of the year from the date key), then

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Prob } (157 - 0.35 \times 19 < \text{true mean} \\ \text{date of first frost} < 157 + .35 \times 19) \\ = 0.90 \end{aligned}$$

$$\text{i.e. Prob } (30 \text{ May} < \mu < 12 \text{ June}) = 0.90$$

For the population standard deviation, Table 4B gives:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Prob } (19 \times .81 < \sigma_{\text{pop}} < 19 \times 1.31) \\ = 0.90 \end{aligned}$$

$$\text{i.e. Prob } (15.4 < \sigma_{\text{pop}} < 24.8) = 0.90$$

For the 1 standard deviation limits for the sampling distribution of the population 10 (or 90) percentile value, we read 0.34 from 4C, and then (approximately)

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Prob } (128 - 0.34 \times 19 < \mu_{10} < 128 + 0.34 \times 19) \\ = .68 \end{aligned}$$

These probability statements are to be interpreted as (for example in the case of the mean)

"We are 90% confident that the interval 30 May to 12 June contains the true population mean date of first frost".

Table 4: Normal or Near Normal Distributions : Confidence Interval Factors

| | | Sample Size n | | | | | | | | |
|---|-------|---------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| A | n = 5 | 10 | 15 | 20 | 25 | 30 | 35 | 40 | 45 | |
| <u>Confidence (%)</u> | | | | | | | | | | |
| 60 | U | .47 | .29 | .23 | .20 | .17 | .16 | .15 | .14 | .13 |
| 60 | L | -.47 | -.29 | -.23 | -.20 | -.17 | -.16 | -.15 | -.14 | -.13 |
| <u>Mean</u> | | | | | | | | | | |
| 90 | U | 1.07 | .61 | .47 | .40 | .35 | .31 | .29 | .27 | .25 |
| 90 | L | -1.07 | -.61 | -.47 | -.40 | -.35 | -.31 | -.29 | -.27 | -.25 |
| | | Sample Size n | | | | | | | | |
| B | n = 5 | 10 | 15 | 20 | 25 | 30 | 35 | 40 | 45 | |
| <u>Confidence (%)</u> | | | | | | | | | | |
| 60 | U | 1.55 | 1.29 | 1.21 | 1.17 | 1.15 | 1.13 | 1.12 | 1.11 | 1.10 |
| 60 | L | .81 | .85 | .87 | .89 | .90 | .90 | .91 | .91 | .92 |
| <u>Standard Deviation</u> | | | | | | | | | | |
| 90 | U | 2.37 | 1.64 | 1.45 | 1.37 | 1.31 | 1.27 | 1.25 | 1.23 | 1.21 |
| 90 | L | .64 | .72 | .76 | .79 | .81 | .82 | .83 | .84 | .85 |
| | | Sample Size n | | | | | | | | |
| C* | n = 5 | 10 | 15 | 20 | 25 | 30 | 35 | 40 | 45 | |
| <u>+ 1 Standard Deviation from the indicated percentile</u> | | | | | | | | | | |
| 10 or 90 | U | .77 | .54 | .44 | .38 | .34 | .31 | .29 | .27 | .25 |
| 10 or 90 | L | -.77 | -.54 | -.44 | -.38 | -.34 | -.31 | -.29 | -.27 | -.25 |
| <u>Percentiles</u> | | | | | | | | | | |
| 25 or 75 | U | .61 | .43 | .35 | .30 | .27 | .24 | .23 | .21 | .20 |
| 25 or 75 | L | -.61 | -.43 | -.35 | -.30 | -.27 | -.24 | -.23 | -.21 | -.20 |
| 50 | U | .56 | .39 | .32 | .28 | .25 | .22 | .21 | .19 | .18 |
| 50 | L | -.56 | -.39 | -.32 | -.28 | -.25 | -.22 | -.21 | -.19 | -.18 |

* In the case of the percentiles, the ± 1 standard deviation limits provide only an approximate 68% confidence interval for the given population percentile.

In infinite repeated sampling the true mean could be expected to fall within the interval 90 percent of the time provided there is no climate change. That is, the Otara distribution of dates of first frost remains normal with the same mean and standard deviation.

8.3 Non-Parametric Confidence Limits

Because of the variation in the form of the distribution it was thought desirable to provide a distribution free approach to the problem of confidence levels. The standard asymptotic result for the standard error of percentiles is (see Lindgren, 1968) :

$$SE_p = \frac{SD}{\sqrt{N}} \times \frac{\sqrt{p(1-p)}}{Y_p}$$

p is the percentile expressed as a fraction

Y_p is the frequency ordinate at X_p

X_p is the $100p$ percentile

SD is the sample standard deviation

N is the sample size

To use this result in practice involves an estimate of Y_p , either graphically from a histogram, or analytically on the fitting of a suitable frequency curve. Particularly when p is small (or large) Y_p is small and small fluctuations in Y_p can cause large variations in SE_p .

By a simple application of the binomial distribution to a series of n observations ranked in numerical order, say:

$$x_{(1)}, x_{(2)}, \dots, x_{(n)}$$

where

$x_{(i)}$ is the i th smallest value it can be shown that

$$P(x_{(r)} < \mu_p < x_{(s)}) = \sum_{k=r}^{S-1} {}^n C_k p^k (1-p)^{n-k}$$

Here,

$P()$ is the probability of the event described within the parentheses and μ_p is the 100p percentile value in the population.

No assumption about the form of the population distribution is made in this result, although there is an assumption about the existence of an underlying distribution.

Although the approach is exact and general, sharper probability statements can be obtained if more is assumed about the underlying population.

Table 5: Non-Normal Distribution : Some Confidence Levels

| <u>Confidence Interval</u> | <u>Sample Size n</u> | | | | | | | | |
|---|----------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| | 11 | 15 | 19 | 23 | 27 | 31 | 35 | 39 | 43 |
| $\text{Min} < \mu_{10} < x_{25}$ or $x_{75} < \mu_{90} < \text{Max}$ | .596 | .738 | .829 | .888 | .927 | .952 | .968 | .978 | .986 |
| $\text{Min} < \mu_{25} < x_{50}$ or $x_{50} < \mu_{75} < \text{Max}$ | .923 | .969 | .987 | .994 | .997 | .998 | .999 | .999 | .999 |
| $x_{25} < \mu_{50} < x_{75}$ | .934 | .964 | .980 | .989 | .994 | .996 | .998 | .999 | .999 |

Tabulated are confidence levels provided by the intervals represented in the left hand margin (read from main tables)

Min - earliest first or last frost date

Max - latest first or last frost date

x_p - 100p-percentile value of sample (in main tables)

μ_p - theoretical population 100p-percentile value, estimated by x_p

See 8.3

(from Binomial Tables, Computation Laboratory, Harvard University).

By reference to the Otara example considered above, we can see that from Table 5:

(with $n = 24$ so linearly interpolating between $n = 23$ and $n = 27$)

the minimum first frost date at Otara (5 May = Min from main tables) and

the 25 percentile value of first frost date there (17 May = x_{25}) constitute a 90 percent confidence interval for the true population 10 percentile value μ_{10} of Otara first frost dates.

i.e. $\text{Prob} (5 \text{ May} < \mu_{10} < 17 \text{ May}) = .90$

Similarly

$\text{Prob} (17 \text{ May} < \mu_{50} < 19 \text{ June}) = .99$

a 99 percent confidence interval for the median first frost date is provided by the quartile dates in the main tables.

9. Influences

A preliminary investigation of factors which might help to determine frost date statistics was made. The aim is to develop predictive relationships for frost date, to supplement the known frost date statistics and enable the more confident mapping of these statistics.

9.1 Geographical

In general terms the 10 and 50 percent first frost dates occur earlier with increasing elevation, latitude and distance inland. The 50 and 90 percent last frost dates occur later with these variables. The dominant effect here is temperature, which decreases with elevation and latitude. There is an effect of distance inland which is probably partly sheltering.

9.2 Meteorological

Mean annual temperature and mean annual range of temperature both quite strongly influence earliness or lateness of frost date statistic. It is to be expected that the lower the mean annual temperature the longer the frost season and the more extreme the earliness or lateness of the first and last frost respectively.

Figure 5 shows why mean annual range might be expected to have some predictive value; on a crude linear approximation the geometry of the situation gives:

$$\delta t = \frac{\delta r}{\tan \theta}$$

where θ is as defined in Figure 5,

t is the time of first frost

r is the semi-range, $\frac{1}{2} \times \text{Range}$,

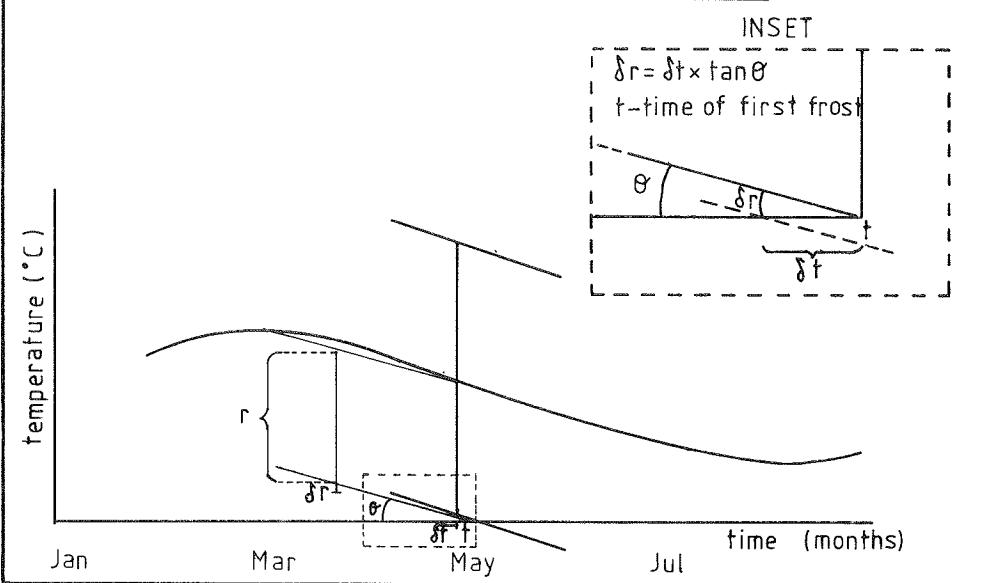
where Range is defined as the width of the envelope of temperature, which is visualised as the smallest region about the mean annual temperature curve which can be expected to contain all temperatures.

The refinement of this approach to a time dependent range envelope can obviously be done. Holding θ fixed, a further assumption, then should have:

$\delta t \propto \delta r$, so it is meaningful to look for this type of dependence in the statistics.

FIG 5

SEGMENT OF MEAN ANNUAL TEMPERATURE CURVE WITH RANGE ENVELOPE VERSUS TIME



In a preliminary study a multiple linear regression of frost date statistic (10% and 50% first frost dates, 50% and 90% last frost dates) on mean annual temperature and temperature range was run, for locations with frost every year, over all New Zealand. Table 6 presents the coefficients, their standard deviations, the

standard error of the residuals, and the squared multiple correlation (R^2) values.

Table 6:

| | Constant (S.D.) | Mean Annual Temperature (S.D.) | Mean Annual Range (S.D.) | R^2 (%) | S.E. (days) |
|------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------|----------------|
| <u>Date of First Frost</u> | | | | | |
| 10 Percentile Date Estimator | 11.6 (27.5) | 1.59 (0.14) | -1.02 (0.18) | 67 | 22.9 |
| 50 Percentile Date Estimator | 80.1 (18.9) | 1.18 (0.10) | -0.90 (0.12) | 73 | 15.7 |
| <u>Date of Last Frost</u> | | | | | |
| 50 Percentile Date Estimator | 348.0 (17.8) | -1.38 (0.09) | 0.85 (0.12) | 79 | 14.9 |
| 90 Percentile Date Estimator | 377.2 (20.2) | -1.31 (0.10) | 0.82 (0.13) | 72 | 16.8 |

The 10% first frost relationship is least satisfactory, with a standard error of about 3 weeks, but even here R^2 is quite high. In general, the temperature influences are quite strong, with standard errors of little more than a fortnight and R^2 values in excess of 70%. Slightly better results overall can be obtained by a regional analysis in many parts of New Zealand. A mapping of the residuals of these overall regressions indicate the relationships to be least satisfactory in the central and southern North Island, in Southland and along the southeast coast of the South Island. It is believed that this is related to greater exposure to windiness from the travelling synoptic disturbances.

This work is now being refined and generalised to coastal areas where frost free periods become important. It demonstrates the possibility of mapping a great deal of the variation in frost statistics by using temperature information. Because of the known variation in mean temperature data with elevation and location this approach holds some promise.

10. Acknowledgements

I thank Mr J.D. Coulter, Dr R.W. Heine, Mr S.M. Hurnard and Dr J.T. Steiner for valuable criticism and advice, and Mrs B. Collen and Mr M. Sloan for carefully drafting the figures.

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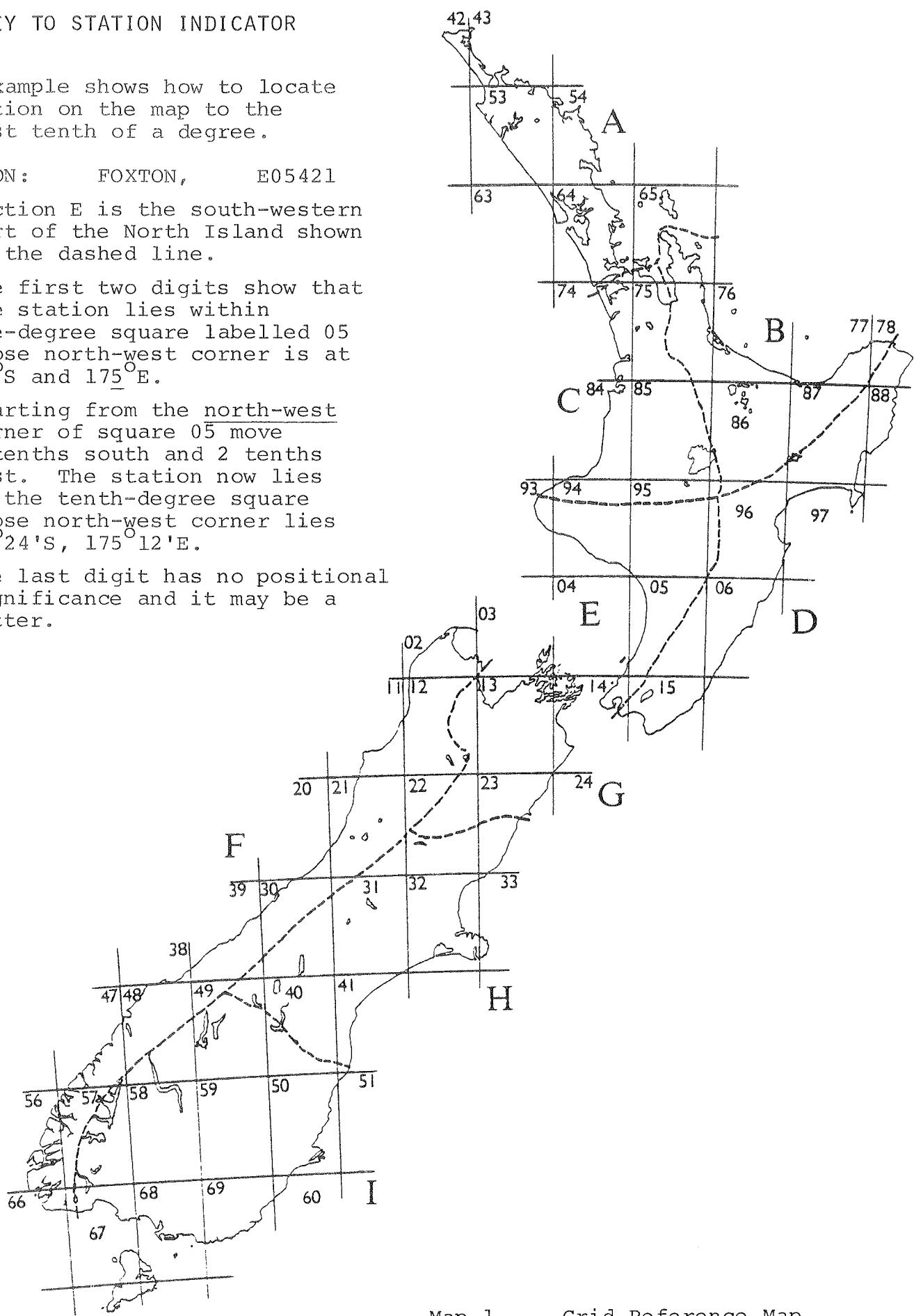
KEY TO STATION INDICATOR

The example shows how to locate a station on the map to the nearest tenth of a degree.

STATION: FOXTON, E05421

E Section E is the south-western part of the North Island shown by the dashed line.

- 0) The first two digits show that the station lies within
- 5) one-degree square labelled 05 whose north-west corner is at $40^{\circ}S$ and $175^{\circ}E$.
- 4) Starting from the north-west corner of square 05 move 4 tenths south and 2 tenths east. The station now lies in the tenth-degree square whose north-west corner lies $40^{\circ}24'S$, $175^{\circ}12'E$.
- 2) The last digit has no positional significance and it may be a letter.



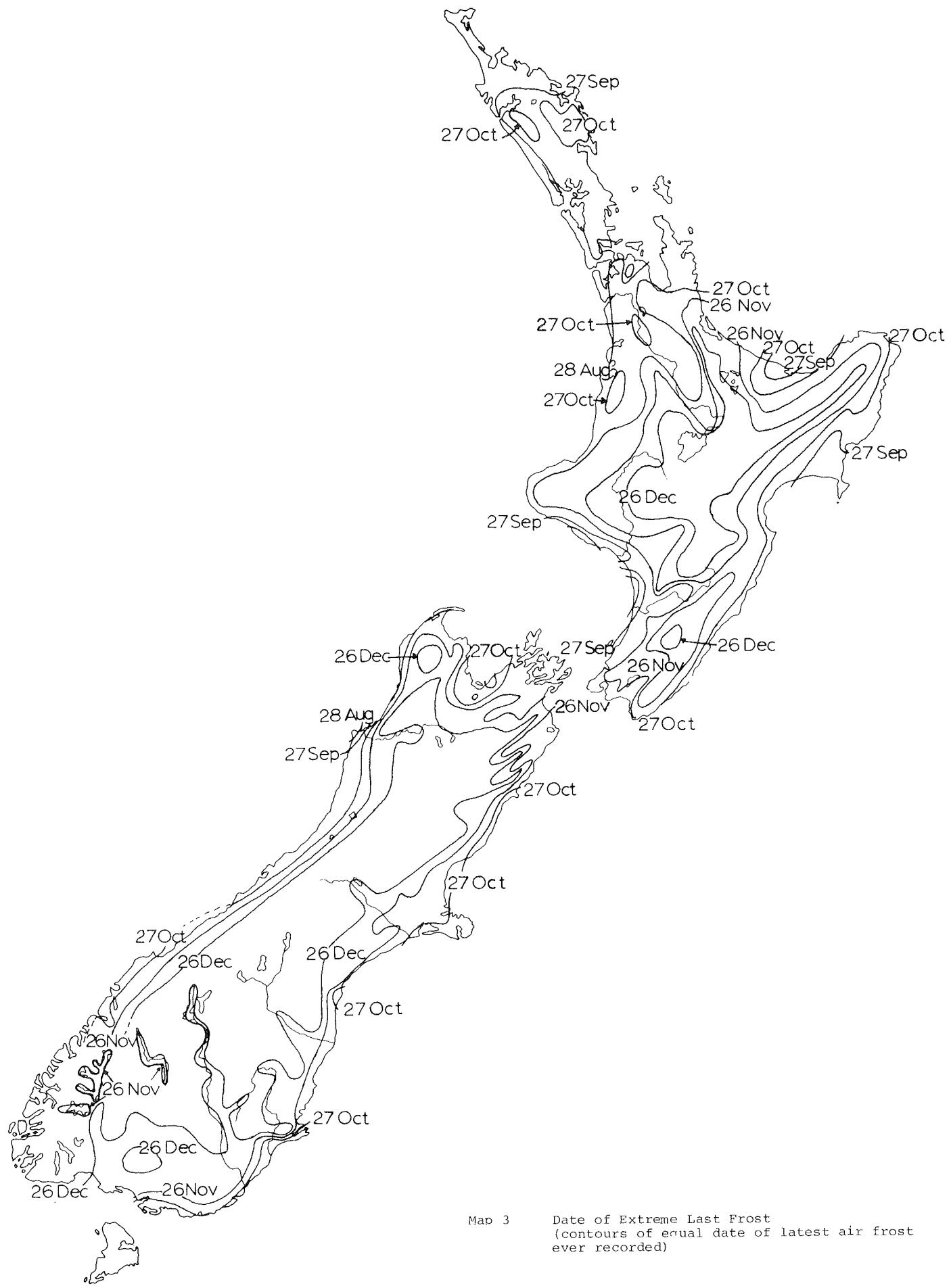
Map 1

Grid Reference Map



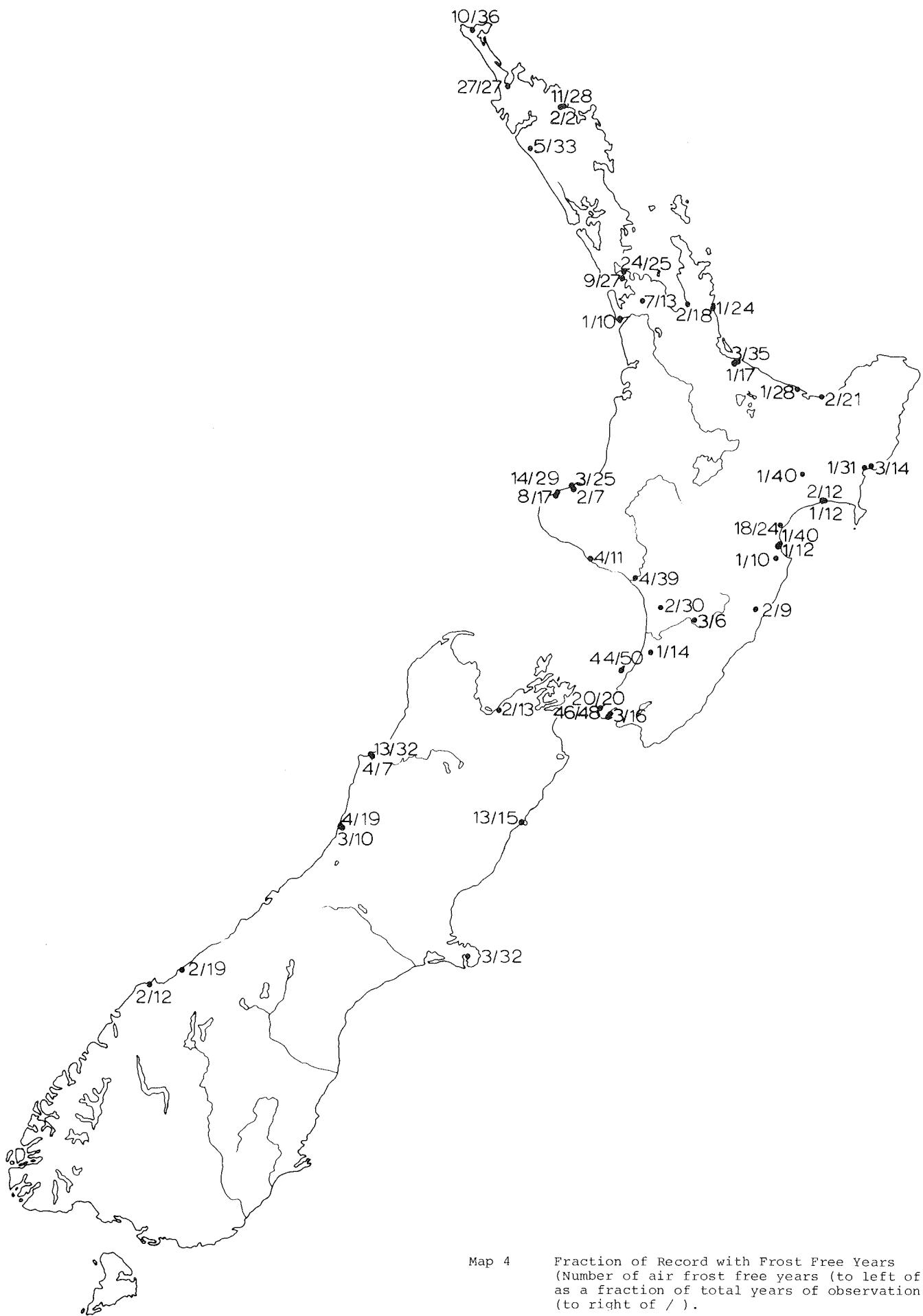
Map 2

Date of Extreme First Frost
(contours of equal date of earliest air frost
ever recorded)



Map 3

Date of Extreme Last Frost
(contours of equal date of latest air frost
ever recorded)



Map 4

Fraction of Record with Frost Free Years
(Number of air frost free years (to left of /)
as a fraction of total years of observation
(to right of /).

APPENDIX

Table Key

See Paeroa

The table shows that in the 14 years of record, the earliest first frost there was 7 April, the median date of first frost was 14 May (half of all first frosts at Paeroa may be expected by this date), and the latest first frost recorded there was 18 June.

Similar interpretation for the dates of last air frost in row II; only 10 percent of all last air frosts occur later than 25 October on average.

For the duration of frost free period the shortest such period recorded is 192 days, the longest 307 days, and a duration of 253 days can be regarded as typical.

Frosts occurred in every year.

See Tauranga

Similar interpretations for the listed percentile dates; the 10 percentile date of first frost there is 20 May; 10 percent of all years the first frost can be expected to have occurred by then.

There were 3 years in the 35 years with no air frost recorded.

Date Key