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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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THE "ROYAL CHARTER" STORM

Today is the anniversary of an event famous in the history of weather science -- the "Royal Charter" storm of October 26, 1859. The storm is called by this name for the reason that the steam clipper "Royal Charter", bound from Melbourne, Australia, for Liverpool, was wrecked in it. Of 500 persons on board, including passengers, officers and crew, more than 450 perished when the vessel went ashore and broke up on the coast of Wales in the early morning of the day mentioned. Charles Dickens wrote a description of this shipwreck.

At the time of the storm the French government had already established a telegraphic storm-warning service, and the establishment of a similar service in the British Isles had recently been advocated by the British Association for the Advancement of Science. The wreck of the "Royal Charter", which made a profound impression, greatly stimulated interest in this project. Admiral FitzRoy, head of the Meteorological Department of the Board of Trade, made a careful study of the storm and this helped to demonstrate the feasibility of the proposed service, which was inaugurated shortly afterward.

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