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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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ROGER'S BLAST

A curiosity of the weather vocabulary is the name "Roger's blast," applied in eastern England (Norfolk and Suffolk) to a small local whirlwind. In Robert Forby's "Vocabulary of East Anglia" (1830) the term is thus defined:

"A sudden and local motion of the air, not otherwise perceptible but by its whirling up the dust on a dry road in perfectly calm weather, somewhat in the manner of a waterspout. It is reckoned a sign of approaching rain. Usually now for a violent and sudden whirlwind, not uncommon in summer on the broads; often of force enough to lift haycocks and dismast yachts." A more recent writer says of it: "A sort of miniature whirlwind, which sometimes occurs during haying season or harvest. Catching the hay or corn up suddenly, it carries it in a spiral course to a great height in the air." Such a whirl is also often referred to on and about the Norfolk Broads as a "Roger," or sometimes as "Sir Roger."

The origin of this name has been a subject of considerable discussion among etymologists and is not definitely settled. Probably, however, the term is Scandinavian, like many other East Anglian expressions, and is related to the Icelandic "roka-blastr," which means the blast of a whirlwind.

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