

MONTHLY WEATHER REPORT

COMPILED FROM RETURNS OF OFFICIAL AND VOLUNTARY OBSERVERS

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Very mild; very wet in north-west Scotland, dry elsewhere

A south-westerly regime prevailed for most of the month, with fronts associated with Atlantic depressions crossing all parts from time to time. However, with predominantly high pressure over southern areas of Great Britain, the fronts became weak as they crossed England and Wales. At the beginning of the month a large anticyclone was centred near south-east England. The anticyclone moved eastwards allowing a cold front to cross the United Kingdom from west to east during the night of the 3rd/4th. A complex depression with its associated frontal system crossed the United Kingdom on the 5th and moved away southwards on the 6th. A weak warm front moved south-eastwards over all areas on the 7th followed by a cold front on the 8th and 9th. An area of high pressure then became re-established over southern areas before giving way to eastward moving fronts between the 11th and 14th. After another transient ridge of high pressure a further cold front crossed England and Wales from the north-west late on the 16th and early on the 17th. High pressure returned to southern areas of Great Britain on the 17th. Active depressions crossed northern Scotland on the 20th and 21st, with associated fronts crossing all parts. A ridge of high pressure extended across the United Kingdom on the 22nd and pressure remained high over the near Continent until the 27th. However, frontal systems continued to affect northern and western areas, and a cold front moved erratically south-eastwards across all areas during the 27th and 28th. Thereafter a very large anticyclone became established over southern areas of Great Britain and the near Continent.

Weather

It was a very mild month, exceptionally so in Scotland, where western parts had very high rainfall amounts. It was the third month in succession to have only about half the normal amount of rainfall over England and Wales as a whole, although January 1989 was less dry than January 1987. Thunder occurred on the 4th at a number of places in South Wales and the Bristol area and there were widespread reports of thunder on the 12th over western Scotland and north-west England. Hail was widespread on the 4th, mainly in western areas, on the 5th confined to Scotland, and on the 10th and 12th over Scotland, north-west England and Northern Ireland. There were hail showers on the 21st, mostly in the Midlands and parts of southern England and on the 28th in the far north and west of Scotland.

Wind

It was a particularly windy month in northern areas, with widespread gales on the 11th, 13th, 14th, 15th and 27th. The far north had further gales on the 28th and 29th. Gusts reached 76 kn at Stornoway, Western Isles on the 13th, 75 kn at Butt of Lewis, Western Isles on the 14th, 74 kn at Lerwick, Shetland on the 15th, 73 kn at Fair Isle, Shetland and 73 kn at Kirkwall, Orkney on the 29th. Wind directions were predominantly south-westerly during the month.

Temperature

Mean monthly temperatures were well above normal everywhere ranging from just under 2 °C

above normal at some places in southern England to over 4 °C above normal in parts of northern Scotland.

It was a very mild month in Scotland, where Glasgow had the mildest January since 1868. Braemar, where records began in 1856, had temperature differences of 4.8 °C above average; in the previous warmest January, in 1898, values were 3.6 °C above average, illustrating how exceptional the month was. At Paisley, Strathclyde Region it was the warmest January in 100 years. Northern Ireland had the mildest January since 1932. Bradford, West Yorkshire had the warmest January since 1975. Highest temperature of the month was 15.5 °C at Torrisdale, Highland Region and the lowest was -6.5 °C at Butser (Hillhampton), Hampshire on the 11th and Grendon Underwood, Buckinghamshire on the 19th.

Rainfall

In western Scotland it was one of the wettest Januaries on record: the persistence of moist south-westerly winds created strong contrasts in rainfall across Scotland, with up to three times the average over the Western Highlands and less than 10 per cent of normal in parts of Aberdeenshire. In Glen Shiel, on the road to Kyle of Lochalsh, one gauge recorded 855 mm while, in contrast, at Inch, north-west of Aberdeen there were only 6 mm.

At Cape Wrath, Highland Region it was the wettest January since records began there in 1941 while at Craibstone, Grampian Region it was the driest since observations started in 1925. The 11th was a wet day over much of Scotland, with 57 mm of rain at Balquhidder, Central Region and 52 mm at Livingston, Lothian Region. The 13th was also a wet day, except in some eastern areas, with 57 mm at Dalwhinnie, Highland Region and 50 mm at Ardentinn, Strathclyde Region. During subsequent days it was drier over low ground but there was further rain in the hills, with a 2-day total of 110 mm in the upper Spey catchment, causing that river to flood. In the area between Loch Quoich and Invergarry no less than six gauges measured in excess of 100 mm on the 14th, the greatest amount being 156.5 mm at Achangart, Highland Region.

The 76 mm of rain that fell at Killin, Central Region over the 24 hours ending at 09 GMT on the 15th followed a fall of 46 mm in the previous 24 hours giving a 122 mm total for the two days. Other heavy daily falls during the month included 68 mm at Cape Wrath, Highland Region and 65 mm at Stornoway, Western Isles on the 19th, and 67 mm at Kinlochewe, Highland Region on the 29th. January 1989 was the third successive month to have only about 50 per cent of average rainfall over England and Wales (varying from about 16 per cent in north-east England to 80 per cent in East Anglia) although the month itself was not exceptionally dry, January 1987 having been drier. Bradford, West Yorkshire had the driest January since 1953, Ashover, Derbyshire the driest since records began in 1966.

Snow

The incidence of snow or sleet falling was well below normal everywhere. Accumulations were mainly confined to higher ground above about 200 m and seldom exceeded 5 cm in depth.

Sunshine

Monthly sunshine totals were above normal nearly everywhere but ranged from about 70 per cent of normal in much of western Scotland to 50 per cent more than the average in many eastern areas. Wick reported its sunniest January since 1946. Bradford, West Yorkshire had its sunniest January on record. The highest daily sunshine was 8.9 hours at Dunkeswell, Devon on the 29th. Most sunshine in the month was 93 hours, measured at Eastbourne, East Sussex.

Fog

Overnight fog became quite widespread and slow to clear by day between the 18th and 20th over England and Wales. Fog patches affected parts of southern England during the last 6 days of the month, but generally cleared after sunrise. Hill fog occurred on several days and there was some coastal fog during the first week.

Miscellaneous Phenomena

None reported.

Table 1 District values

District	Air temperature °C					Mean 30 cm soil temp °C	Rain-days	Rainfall	Sunshine
	Highest Max*	Lowest Min*	Max.	Min.	Mean				
	Difference from average					% of average			
0 Scotland N	14.6	-4.9	+3.6	+3.5	+3.6	+2.7	+1	195	109
1 Scotland E	15.1	-4.2	+4.2	+4.1	+4.1	+3.1	-6	78	122
2 England E & NE	13.4	-2.8	+3.5	+3.3	+3.4	+2.6	-8	39	123
3 East Anglia	13.0	-4.7	+2.6	+2.0	+2.3	+2.2	-6	63	135
4 Midland Counties	13.1	-5.9	+3.0	+2.5	+2.7	+2.4	-6	48	135
5 England SE & Central S	12.4	-4.5	+2.8	+2.3	+2.6	+2.5	-5	46	134
6 Scotland W	13.3	-3.6	+3.3	+3.9	+3.6	+3.1	+1	130	69
7 England NW & Wales N	15.0	-3.0	+2.9	+3.3	+2.9	+2.9	-4	69	120
8 England SW & Wales S	14.0	-4.4	+2.5	+2.3	+2.2	+2.5	-3	58	120
N Ireland	13.7	-2.0	+3.0	+3.0	+3.0	+2.6	-1	68	103
Scotland	15.1	-4.9	+3.7	+3.8	+3.8	+3.0	-1	146	100
England & Wales	15.0	-5.9	+2.9	+2.6	+2.7	+2.5	-5	55	128

* Highest maximum and lowest minimum of District Value Stations