

Monthly Weather Report

OF THE METEOROLOGICAL OFFICE

Summary of observations compiled from returns of official stations and voluntary observers

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January 1968 — *Generally cold until the 12th, then rather mild*

Weather was cyclonic in character on the 1st-9th and 13th-18th. At other times generally anticyclonic weather prevailed with pressure high to the south, to the west or over the British Isles.

The month began rather cold with a trough of low pressure, accompanied by rain and snow, moving slowly across the country on the 1st and 2nd. The trough was closely followed by a depression which, as it moved eastwards across Scotland on the 3rd, brought heavy snowstorms to the extreme north. The north-westerly airstream behind the depression brought frequent showers to most districts. A frontal system from the Atlantic brought milder weather with periods of rain to southern England on the 4th and 5th but elsewhere it remained cold with snow at times. In parts of Devon afternoon temperatures reaching 14°C contrasted sharply with near freezing conditions in southern Scotland and northern England, where a foot of snow covered the lower hills.

From the 6th until the 12th temperatures in the south-west were well above average. Periods of heavy rain on the 6th led to flooding in some districts as a small depression moved south-eastwards across south-west England into northern France. Northerly winds and occasional snow or sleet showers followed the depression on the 7th, but on the night of the 8th/9th a deepening depression brought heavy rain and widespread floods as it moved south-eastwards across Devon and Cornwall. Many places in the south-west recorded more than 50 mm of rain. Strong to gale force, easterly winds on the northern side of the depression brought heavy falls of snow to parts of the Midlands. On the morning of the 9th much of central England lay under a foot of snow. A ridge of high pressure moving slowly across the country following the disturbance on the 10th, 11th and 12th brought a change to quiet mainly dry weather with well-broken cloud and severe frost at night; at Coltishall temperatures fell to -13°C on the morning of the 13th.

The cold spell came to an end on the 13th as mild south-westerly winds from the Atlantic brought rain to all areas. The rain was heavy at times — falls of 30-40 mm were recorded in north-west England — and was preceded by snow in some eastern districts. This rain, together with a sharp rise of temperature, led to the rapid thaw of lying snow and to widespread floods in Wales and the West Country. During the afternoon of the 14th a depression deepened very rapidly as it moved eastwards towards western Scotland and that night wind reached storm force in most northern districts. A gust of 116 kt at Great Dun Fell, Westmorland, was the highest confirmed wind speed ever recorded in England and Wales. Gale damage was extensive in central Scotland, and Glasgow with gusts exceeding 90 kt in many places, was particularly badly hit. Between 50 and 60 mm of rain were recorded at a number of places in west Scotland. This disturbance was followed on the 16th and 18th by others which brought a renewal of strong to gale force winds and further widespread and occasionally heavy rain.

The weather pattern changed on the 19th as an anticyclone developed over the English Channel bringing the rather wet spell to an end. From the 20th to the 22nd an anticyclone covered the British Isles and weather was mainly dry but dull. Fog forming overnight in the Midlands and eastern England persisted at many places for much of the following day during this period.

The anticyclone retreated westwards on the 23rd and from then until the 26th was centred off the west of Ireland. Rather mild north-westerly winds on the eastern side of the anticyclone brought showers to many places during this period. By the 27th the anticyclone was almost stationary to the north of the Azores and troughs in the associated north-westerly airstream brought periods of continuous rain to most districts of the British Isles. The anticyclone began drifting eastwards again on the 28th which was one of the sunniest days of the month; Ross-on-Wye recorded 8.2 hours of sunshine thus equalling the sunniest January day on record, for the British Isles. During the last three days of the month the anticyclone covered the Bay of Biscay and an increasing part of western Europe. The resulting south-westerly winds originating in low latitudes brought occasional rain, and exceptionally mild weather to the British Isles; temperatures on the 30th reached 14°C at some places.

Pressure and Wind — Mean pressure was above the average everywhere except in the Shetlands, the deviation from average at 0900 GMT ranging from -0.8 mb at Lerwick to +7.1 mb at Scilly. Surface winds were mainly north-westerly at first backing to south-east to east on the 8th and 9th. South-westerly winds on the 13th-22nd were preceded and followed by three days of light variable winds after which winds were generally north-westerly until the 28th and south-westerly during the last three days of the month. Winds reached gale force on 22 days. The gale of the 14th/15th was the most widespread and severe. Gusts exceeding 90 kt were recorded at many places and there was widespread devastation with loss of life. A gust of 102 kt was recorded at Tiree.

Temperature — Temperature was mainly below the average until the 12th except for two days during the first week in south-east England, but during the remainder of the month it was generally above average.

Extremes included:—(England and Wales) 14.4°C at Winnington and Santon Downham on the 14th and 15th respectively; -14.4°C at Cromer on the 13th; (Scotland) 13.9°C at Glentress on the 19th; -17.2°C at Braemar on the 10th; (Northern Ireland) 14.0°C at Glenanne on the 14th; -11.1°C at Derrynogd Forest on the 10th.

Rainfall — Rainfall was below the average over most of Britain, but slightly above the average in Lancashire, Cheshire and Shropshire and above average locally in Nottinghamshire, the West Riding of Yorkshire, along the English Channel coast and in parts of the north and west of Scotland. Rainfall was above average over most of Northern Ireland and over Wales except the south-east and south-west. Some places in Northumberland and south-east Scotland had less than half their January average.

Thunder was heard on 8 days and thunderstorms were widespread on the 14th.

Snow or sleet (rain or drizzle and snow) fell over much of the country during the first two weeks and during the last week. Snow cover was deepest around the 10th when it lay 3 to 6 inches deep in south and east England, 6-12 inches over much of the Midlands and western England and 16-20 inches in parts of northern and central Wales.

Sunshine — Sunshine was rather greater in the north and east than in the south and west, percentages of local average ranging from 48 at Sidmouth to 105 at Huddersfield.

Fog — Fog at 0900 GMT was reported from one place or another on 9 days, mist or fog being widespread during the first week. There was considerable hill and coast fog on the 14th and the 20th-23rd was a foggy period, the fog persisting all day in some places in Scotland on the 22nd.

Miscellaneous Phenomena — The aurora was visible in Scotland on the 22nd.

TABLE I—DISTRICT VALUES, JANUARY, 1968

DISTRICTS	AIR TEMPERATURE °C					EARTH TEMP. °C.		RAIN DAYS	RAIN-FALL	SUNSHINE
	*Highest Max.	*Lowest Min.	Max.	Min.	Mean	Mean 30 cm.	Mean 22 cm.			
						Difference from Average				
0 SCOTLAND, N.	11.1	-8.6	0.0	-0.2	-0.1	+0.6	+1.0	+3	104	84
1 SCOTLAND, E.	12.2	-7.8	+0.5	+0.4	+0.5	-0.2	+0.2	-1	63	102
2 ENGLAND, N.E.	13.3	-6.5	+0.8	+0.6	+0.7	-0.3	-0.5	-1	57	94
3 ENGLAND, E.	12.8	-13.3	+0.2	+0.2	+0.3	+0.2	-0.3	0	85	69
4 MIDLANDS	12.7	-9.4	+0.8	+1.1	+0.9	+0.4	-0.2	-1	84	89
5 ENGLAND, S.E.	12.8	-11.7	+0.3	+0.4	+0.3	-0.3	-0.3	0	87	78
6 SCOTLAND, W.	12.2	-10.2	+0.7	+1.0	+0.9	+0.1	+0.4	-1	75	87
7 ENGLAND, N.W. and N. Wales	13.4	-8.3	+0.8	+1.2	+1.0	+0.6	+0.1	-1	105	69
8 ENGLAND, S.W. and S. Wales	12.8	-12.2	+0.9	+1.1	+0.9	+0.8	+0.1	-2	83	47
N. IRELAND	13.0	-7.4	+1.1	+1.4	+1.3	-	-	-2	116	69
SCOTLAND	12.2	-10.2	+0.4	+0.4	+0.4	-	-	0	84	91
ENG. and WALES	13.4	-13.3	+0.6	+0.8	+0.7	-	-	-1	85	74

*Highest Max. and Lowest Min. of the District Value Stations.