

February 2003

The averaging period used for the following assessment was 1961-1990.

UK overview

A mostly dry and very sunny month across the UK, with mean temperatures slightly above average.

Moderate and at times heavy snowfall caused widespread disruption across Northern Ireland on the 1st and 2nd. A high of 15.7 °C was recorded in Central London on the 26th.

England and Wales diary of highlights

Dry and sunny overall. Changeable and mainly dry at first but mild and wet second week. Cold, dry and frosty third week, followed by very mild sunny weather, especially in the south.

1st to 7th A deep complex low moved steadily from Iceland to the Balkans by the 6th, introducing changeable weather. There were good sunny periods and some light wintry showers mostly over eastern and northern areas of the region. There was some thunder reported on the 2nd and 3rd. Overnight frost was widespread but it became milder and cloudier during the 6th and 7th with occasional light rain and drizzle.

8th to 12th Unsettled and mild or very mild with spells of rain as Atlantic fronts advanced across the UK. However the associated weather bands stalled over south-east England later on the 11th as pressure rose to the east and over the region. It became murky on the 12th with patchy rain and drizzle with some hill and coastal fog.

13th to 19th Cold dry anticyclonic weather prevailed with widespread frost at night, severe in places inland as high pressure settled over south Scandinavia. The dry E or SE winds felt very cold at times, however sunshine was plentiful. The temperature fell to -10.5 °C at Redesdale/Northumberland on the 18th.

20th to 26th More changeable but mainly dry as high pressure slowly receded east into Russia and fronts made limited progress from the Atlantic. There was widespread overnight frost at first, however with mostly long sunny periods and southerly winds it became exceptionally mild at times by day. A maximum of 15.7 °C was recorded in central London on the 26th. Occasional rain and cloud affected south-west districts from time to time as fronts grazed the area, while other parts had patchy mist and fog on occasions during the morning.

27th to 28th Low pressure over the north Atlantic became more intense during the last few days, driving rain belts across the region from the south-west. Patchy mist and fog gave way to bands rain and showers, heavy at times, especially on the 28th. Temperatures stayed in the very mild category in most places.

Scotland diary of highlights

Outstandingly sunny.

February was dominated by a long spell of dry south or south-easterly winds blowing around an anticyclone near the Baltic. The direction of the wind, along the length of Britain, was crucial in minimising the invasion of low cloud to parts of the east and west coasts. Consequently much of the mainland enjoyed many sunny days.

The month opened with a wintry spell of weather as a depression near Iceland moved south-east to the North Sea. Strong winds veered from west to north and showers turned to snow. Most of Scotland experienced some

lying snow, worst in the north-east, where strong winds caused drifting. A ridge of high pressure moving in from the west on the 5th gave a sunny day, with the temperature falling to -11 °C at Tulloch Bridge.

The cold snap was immediately followed by a mild spell as low pressure to the north-west of Iceland drove strong south-easterly winds across Scotland. There was 37 mm of rain at Loch Glascarnoch on the 6th and the temperature reached 12 °C at Tain on the 8th.

A fair interlude on the 9th was followed by a wet and windy day on the 10th, with 31 mm of rain at Lochranza and gusts of 67 m.p.h. at Barra and South Uist. The long spell of south or south-easterly winds began on the 11th and lasted until near the end of the month. It was characterised by many sunny days, particularly in the central and north-eastern Highlands. At times, low cloud off the North Sea affected eastern districts and frontal cloud fringed the west. The core of the spell lasted from the 14th to the 22nd and was notable for a number of features. Air of very low humidity (below 10 %) covered the mountain tops and descended to low levels at times in the north-west. Winds were strong, with gusts reaching 67 m.p.h. at Barra on the 16th. Low temperatures in some glens (down to -11 °C) were accompanied by mild afternoons in the north-west, with the temperature up to 12 °C.

Towards the end of the month, frontal systems approached from the south-west and the weather became more generally cloudy. On the 28th a band of rain moved north-east.

Northern Ireland diary of highlights

Dry and sunny.

This was a dry month, which would have been very dry except for the heavy fall of rain on the 28th. With the exception of the 20th and 22nd the period from the 11th to 25th was fairly dry throughout the province making it the driest February since 1998. In contrast the wettest days were recorded on the 1st, 2nd, 10th and 28th. Sunshine durations were well above average, with many areas having around nine or ten days with over five hours of bright sunshine recorded on each day. Across Northern Ireland overall mean temperatures were slightly above normal.

1st to 5th Cold conditions prevailed throughout the start of the month. Moderate and at times heavy snowfalls occurred on the 1st and 2nd causing widespread disruption across the province, with snow lying on ground surfaces up to 5 and 6 centimetres deep. Wintry precipitation continued to occur on the 3rd and 4th allowing snow and ice to prevail on ground surfaces through until Thursday the 5th and on higher ground until the 6th.

6th to 11th A rather unsettled spell with light to moderate rain recorded on most days, though parts of County Fermanagh recorded some heavier falls on the 9th. Daytime temperatures were mild to very mild over this period with temperatures over 10 °C being recorded on the 6th, 8th and 10th. Little or no sunshine was recorded between the 6th and 8th as well as on the 10th. In contrast some areas recorded over 6 hours of sunshine alone on the 9th and 11th.

12th to 20th Over this period mainly dry conditions prevailed almost everywhere, though this was the coldest period during the month with both day and night-time temperatures recording below average values. Widespread air and ground frosts were recorded throughout this period with severe ground frost recorded in many areas on the 12th, 14th and 15th. Sunny conditions prevailed on most days with the brightest period of the month occurring between 11th and 15th, though little or no sunshine was recorded during the 16th and 20th.

21st to 25th A mild, dry period with fairly sunny conditions between the 22nd and 24th. One of the highest daily temperatures of 12.6 °C was recorded on the 23rd.

26th to 28th Rather unsettled weather concluded the remainder of the month. Cloudy conditions brought bands of rain and showers across the province to give some moderate and at times heavy falls. Due to continuous precipitation on Friday 28th many areas recorded an inch of rain on this day alone.

Last updated: 27 February 2013

