

MONTHLY WEATHER REPORT

COMPILED FROM RETURNS OF OFFICIAL AND VOLUNTARY OBSERVERS

FEBRUARY 1989

VOLUME 106

NUMBER 2

Wet in western areas, but dry in the east; generally mild and sunny

The month began with a ridge of high pressure from an anticyclone over central Europe affecting much of central and southern areas of Great Britain; as the anticyclone went into a decline, fronts associated with a deepening Atlantic depression gradually moved across all areas of the United Kingdom. A cold front crossed all areas on the 4th, clearing south-east England early on the 5th; while further fronts affected northern areas, southern areas again came under the influence of high pressure over the near Continent. A slow-moving active cold front moved in from the Atlantic on the 9th, then continued eastwards, weakening as it went. An occluded front crossed all areas on the 11th and over the next six days fronts alternated with transient ridges of high pressure. A strong westerly flow was maintained over the British Isles with pressure staying high in the south and some intense depressions moving eastwards to the north of Scotland. A complex frontal system associated with an Atlantic depression moved over the western areas of the British Isles on the 17th, eventually clearing south-east England by the 19th, leaving all parts of the United Kingdom in a moist westerly airflow between the 20th and 24th. On the 24th a depression tracked eastwards across southern England. Another deep depression moved eastwards along the English Channel on the 25th before moving away over the North Sea leaving all areas of the United Kingdom in a north-westerly airstream for the rest of the month.

Weather

February was a rather changeable month with contrasting weather; in northern areas, and particularly in Scotland, there was some very wet and stormy weather in western areas while some eastern areas remained very dry, while southern England, after a month of relatively high pressure recorded its lowest pressure for over a century on the 25th. Thunder was widespread in western Scotland on the 18th and 19th and in southern areas of England and Wales on the 26th. Hail was frequent during the month, especially in northern Scotland.

Wind

It was very windy, particularly in northern areas on the 13th, with gusts reaching 92 kn at Butt of Lewis and 93 kn at Benbecula, in the Western Isles and 100 kn at Fair Isle, Shetland. At Fraserburgh, Grampian Region the mean wind speed increased very rapidly from 15 kn at 1730 GMT to 60 kn at 1900 GMT as the wind direction veered from south-westerly to north-westerly, a record gust for a low-level station of 123 kn was measured; the hourly mean speed was 66 kn. The high winds disrupted traffic and brought down trees as far south as Leicestershire and North Wales, with buses and high-sided lorries blown over. In Dunfermline, Fife Region nine people were injured when the roof of a hospital ward was blown off. Winds were again strong in south-west England on the 25th with gusts in most places to over 50 kn and a gust of 81 kn reached at Gwennap Head, Cornwall. Wind directions were predominantly southerly or westerly.

Temperature

Mean monthly temperatures were above normal

everywhere, ranging from 3 °C above normal at Lyneham, Wiltshire and Bramham, West Yorkshire to just over 0.5 °C at Cape Wrath, Highland Region.

It was a very mild month in most places; Ashover, Derbyshire reported the highest minimum temperature at the station since its record began in 1967, 9.5 °C, and the warmest February on record, with a mean of 5.1 °C. Hampstead, Greater London reported the highest mean temperature since 1966 and the highest mean maximum temperature equal with that of 1961. The highest temperature during the month was 15.9 °C at East Bergholt, Suffolk on the 6th and the lowest was -10.6 °C at Carnwath, Strathclyde Region on the 27th.

Rainfall

Monthly rainfall amounts were above normal nearly everywhere west of a line from Banff, Grampian Region to Beachy Head, East Sussex reaching as much as 450 per cent above normal in the vicinity of Fort Augustus, Highland Region. In contrast, parts of Lincolnshire had less than 50 per cent of normal rainfall.

The 5th and 6th were days of contrasting weather in Scotland, when the easternmost parts of Scotland had little or no rain, while the rest of Scotland had a large amount of rain, heavy in places. As a result of the very wet January, rivers, lochs and reservoirs were already full to overflowing when exceptionally heavy rainfall occurred on 5 and 6 February. In the western Highlands rainfall was torrential and prolonged on both days, causing flooding and landslides. Bridges, roads, housing estates and farmland were affected over a wide area and the 127-year old railway bridge over the River Ness at Inverness was swept away by flood-water on the 7th. The 2-day total of 215 mm (83.7 mm on the 5th and 131.7 mm on the 6th) at Fort William has an estimated return period of several hundred years, as does the 5-day total of 299 mm measured from the 2nd to 6th. Other heavy daily falls included 170 mm at Kinlochewe, Highland Region on the 5th. Killin, Central Region reached 123 mm during the two days 5 and 6 February. There was a further heavy fall of 69 mm at Fort William on the 14th.

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	13.2	-8.3	+1.4	+1.2	+1.3	+1.7	+7	293	99
1 Scotland E	15.5	-9.7	+2.2	+2.0	+2.1	+2.5	+3	171	140
2 England E & NE	15.3	-5.4	+2.8	+2.0	+2.4	+2.2	-1	110	157
3 East Anglia	14.9	-4.1	+2.7	+1.6	+2.2	+1.8	-1	99	152
4 Midland Counties	14.6	-5.9	+2.9	+1.7	+2.3	+2.0	+2	118	163
5 England SE & Central S	15.0	-3.5	+2.8	+2.0	+2.3	+2.1	+2	125	135
6 Scotland W	13.1	-10.6	+1.9	+1.8	+1.9	+2.5	+8	219	93
7 England NW & Wales N	14.4	-3.7	+2.3	+2.7	+2.3	+2.5	+5	172	129
8 England SW & Wales S	14.9	-3.0	+2.6	+2.0	+2.1	+2.2	+3	150	120
N Ireland	14.5	-5.8	+1.8	+1.1	+1.4	+2.0	+7	132	128
Scotland	15.5	-10.6	+1.8	+1.7	+1.8	+2.2	+6	245	111
England & Wales	15.3	-5.9	+2.7	+2.0	+2.3	+2.1	+2	135	143

* Highest maximum and lowest minimum of District Value Stations

Snow

On the 4th, 12th, 15th and 16th many northern areas had sleet and snow showers. Snow depths of up to 9 cm were measured in the Grampians. Southern parts of Great Britain had some snow and sleet early on the 17th; the sleet and snow moved north-eastwards during the day. On the 19th Scotland and later northern England had some snow. Sleet and snow showers continued on the 20th in Scotland with several centimetres lying in the Highlands; the showers extended back to southern areas of Great Britain by the 23rd. Snowfall was considerable across parts of Wales, the Peak District and the southern Pennines on the 24th, and on the 25th significant snow fell over many hilly areas including hills in southern and central England; there were 2 m drifts in parts of the Cotswolds and Stow-on-the-Wold, Gloucestershire and Chipping Norton, Oxfordshire were cut off for two hours. Further snow or sleet fell on the 26th, 27th and 28th.

Sunshine

Monthly sunshine amounts were above average nearly everywhere and reached almost twice the average at Tynemouth, Tyne and Wear; the exception was the western side of Scotland where it was rather dull with only 75 per cent of average at Eskdalemuir, Dumfries and Galloway.

Bradford, West Yorkshire had the sunniest February on record at the station. Highest daily sunshine amount was 9.9 hours at Long Sutton, Hampshire on the 23rd. The highest monthly total was 128 hours at Culterty, Grampian Region.

Fog

Patchy overnight fog formed in southern and eastern England on the 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 11th. Fog formed before dawn in central and southern counties of England on the 8th and persisted into the 9th across the north Midlands and parts of Norfolk and Lincolnshire. Hill fog occurred extensively on the 9th over high ground in the south-west and north-west.

Miscellaneous Phenomena

None reported.