

MONTHLY WEATHER REPORT

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Mostly mild and unsettled, but mainly dry first week.

For a week high pressure was dominant with a strong ridge covering southern parts of the United Kingdom until the 4th and an anticyclone drifting south-eastwards across the south-west on the 6th. At times, however, rather weak fronts encroached, mainly into the north. On the 8th active fronts reached the south while next day a deep depression moved slowly across Wales and southern England. A ridge of high pressure followed.

From the 11th to the 26th a series of fronts crossed all areas. Deep depressions remained just to the south-west of the British Isles between the 15th and 18th before two, albeit filling centres advanced over Great Britain during the next three days. Late on the 22nd a small but intense low came eastwards over the Irish Sea and northern England while on the 25th a deep depression crossed the far north of Scotland. During the remainder of the month pressure was high just to the south and low to the north with frontal activity largely confined to northern areas.

Weather

It was a mostly mild and unsettled month with rain at times, particularly during the second half, although, except in Scotland, most places were mainly dry for about a week at the beginning and end. For a few days during the second week it was cold with snow in many areas. Scattered thunderstorms occurred on a few occasions, mainly in Highland Region on the 14th, Northern Ireland on the 17th and 18th and southern England on the 21st and 22nd.

Wind

Except in central and southern areas during the first week of the month winds were often fresh or strong with gales at times, especially over exposed western and northern areas. The gales were severe in places on a number of occasions; on the 9th a recently-launched oil rig was torn from its moorings at Holyhead, Anglesey, on the 20th the gales and high tides caused flooding along much of the south coast while on the 31st storm force and even hurricane force were reached locally in the north with gusts of 92 kn at Lynemouth, Northumberland, and 98 kn at Cairngorm Chairlift, Highland Region. During the first three weeks winds were mostly from a southerly direction although between the 5th and 10th they were from a northerly point at times. Thereafter, they were mainly from the south-west or west. The far north, however, had a period of easterly winds between the 16th and 25th.

Temperature

Except in Jersey, where the monthly mean value was just below normal, temperatures were above average ranging from less than 1 °C above in Orkney, Shetland, Guernsey, much of East Anglia and in scattered areas elsewhere in Great Britain to slightly more than 2 °C above locally in Grampian Region and Co. Fermanagh.

Until the 17th temperatures were rather variable with the north being very mild until the 4th while all parts were cold between the 10th and 12th. But apart from a few occasions in the north temperatures were generally above average during the remainder of the month with the south being very mild between the 22nd and 28th. The 27th was exceptionally mild

in many areas with maxima of 16.5 °C at Colwyn Bay, Clwyd, 16.0 °C at Finzean, Grampian Region, and St Abbs Head, Borders Region, 15.6 °C at Loughall, Co. Armagh, and 15.4 °C at Tynemouth, Tyne and Wear, the last being the highest in December since records began in the area in 1871. Occurrences of frost were mainly confined to the first four nights in parts of the south and at times in most areas between the 7th and 13th with minima of -7 °C or below locally in Great Britain.

Rainfall

Monthly rainfall totals were above normal over much of the United Kingdom with more than twice the average being recorded in parts of north-east England, Humberside and West Yorkshire, and locally in Lancashire. At most places in East Anglia, the south-eastern half of the Midlands, part of Lincolnshire, the Channel Islands, and in scattered areas in southern England, east and west Scotland totals were below normal with less than 60 per cent of average falling in Jersey and locally in Cambridgeshire.

The first week of the month was mainly dry, except in the west and far north of Scotland. Subsequently, showers or longer periods of rain were frequent although England and Wales, except the north-west, and the Channel Islands were mainly dry again during the last six days. The rainfall was heavy at times, especially on the 8th in the north of England, Wales, Northern Ireland and the Isle of Man, around mid-month in parts of the west, with 97.2 mm at Swincombe, near Hexworthy, Devon, on the 18th, and from the 26th in the north-west of Scotland, with 114.4 mm at Cononish, near Tyndrum, Central Region, on the 27th and 119.2 mm at Cassley, Highland Region, on the 31st. In Highland Region on the 27th 18 sheep and two would-be rescuers were lifted to safety by helicopter, when stranded by flooding at Loch Maree, while the main Inverness to Fort William road was cut by landslips and the Kyle of Lochalsh to Lochcannon road blocked by subsidence and flooding. During the night of 31st/1st January the occupants were rescued when their ground floor flats at Langside, Glasgow, were flooded.

Snow

Wintry showers occurred over Scotland at times, mainly in the north with slight snowfall in places, while on the 9th and 10th they also affected some other areas, particularly in the east and west. Much of Great Britain had a period of snow on the 11th and 12th with moderate to heavy accumulations in places, especially over the higher ground from Wales and the Midlands northwards with depths of 18 cm at Balquidder, Central Region, and 23 cm at Bacup, Lancashire.

Sunshine

Sunshine totals were below the monthly average in Northern Ireland, the Isle of Man and in much of Scotland, northern England and North Wales, but above normal at most places elsewhere. Values ranged from less than half the average in parts of north-eastern Scotland and Co. Londonderry to more than 150 per cent of normal in London, part of Essex and the Channel Islands.

The brightest part of the month, except over Scotland, was the first week when the Channel Islands and south-east England were particularly sunny. Otherwise, there was a good deal of mainly dull weather.

Fog

Hill fog occurred rather frequently, especially in the west and north during the second half of the month. Patches of fog also formed overnight on some occasions, mainly in the south of England during the first week, while occurrences of coastal fog were almost entirely confined to the south-west during the fourth week.

Miscellaneous Phenomena

On the 7th, between 0830 and 0915 GMT and for the second time in two weeks, diamond dust fell during freezing fog at Trowbridge, Wiltshire, and partially covered the ground; the sky was obscured and the temperature -3.9 °C. On the 15th a funnel cloud was seen at Fair Isle, Shetland, while on the 21st a tornado caused considerable damage to some houses at Shoreham-by-Sea, West Sussex.

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	13.1	-3.8	+1.2	+1.0	+1.1	+0.9	+2	168	67
1 Scotland E	15.4	-8.0	+1.8	+1.7	+1.7	+1.5	+2	130	66
2 England E & NE	16.0	-6.6	+1.2	+1.3	+1.2	+0.8	+2	168	110
3 East Anglia	13.3	-5.5	+0.9	+0.9	+0.9	+0.9	0	78	121
4 Midland Counties	13.9	-7.1	+1.5	+1.2	+1.3	+0.9	-1	125	123
5 England SE & Central S	13.9	-6.1	+1.4	+1.1	+1.3	+0.6	0	109	129
6 Scotland W	13.8	-8.0	+1.6	+1.6	+1.6	+1.4	+3	128	77
7 England NW & Wales N	13.9	-5.8	+1.2	+1.3	+1.3	+0.9	+2	139	88
8 England SW & Wales S	14.0	-4.9	+1.2	+0.8	+1.0	+0.9	-1	118	115
N Ireland	13.7	-2.8	+1.7	+1.9	+1.8	+1.7	+2	121	67
Scotland	15.4	-8.0	+1.5	+1.4	+1.5	+1.3	+2	142	70
England & Wales	16.0	-7.1	+1.2	+1.1	+1.2	+0.8	0	123	114

* Highest maximum and lowest minimum of District Value Stations