

MONTHLY WEATHER REPORT

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Very mild; duller and drier than average in most places

Relatively low pressure over the British Isles on the first 3 days was followed by an area of persistent high pressure to the south and this dominated most districts until the 25th. However, troughs of low pressure affected northern areas at times during this period and a cyclonic interlude occurred everywhere from the 18th to 23rd. From the 26th an intense anticyclone near north Scotland influenced all areas.

Weather

It was a very mild but mostly dull month. Strong winds occurred frequently in the north where it was more changeable than farther south but all areas, except north Scotland, had below average rainfall.

Wind

The number of days with gales reported was well above average over coasts in Scotland and Northern Ireland, and over these regions as a whole reports of local gales were almost a daily occurrence from the 3rd to 25th. On the evening of the 15th a gust of 107 kt was recorded at Cairngorm (Inverness-shire), height 1075 metres above sea level and overnight gusts of 50–60 kt occurred widely in Scotland. On the 19th south to south-west winds reached gale force locally in many areas; gusts of 58 kt and 53 kt were recorded at stations as far apart as Benbecula (Inverness-shire) and Manston (Kent) respectively. On the last 3 days easterly winds occasionally reached gale force on parts of the east and south coasts of England.

Temperature

Monthly mean temperature ranged from about 1 degC above average on the south coast of England to around 3.5 degC above average in parts of Scotland. Mean temperature over large regions of the United Kingdom was higher than the November value, most notably in Scotland and northern England, and Tynemouth (Northumberland) had its mildest December since 1934. Although the month began and ended cold with night frost in places, temperatures were generally above average everywhere from the 4th to 27th, except in north Scotland around the 22nd. Many areas had very mild spells during the second and third weeks, especially in Scotland and central and eastern England. Notably mild days included the 4th in east Scotland when 16.2°C was recorded at Inverness and the 20th and 21st in most areas; on the 20th the temperature reached 16.3°C at Colwyn Bay (Denbighshire) and on the next day 15.2°C was recorded at Lowestoft (Suffolk) – the highest December temperature there since the present record began in 1921.

Rainfall

With the exception of north Scotland all districts had below average rainfall (including melted snow), and less than half the average occurred over almost the whole of Northern Ireland, most of England and Wales, and coastal areas in east and south-west Scotland. Rainfall was less than a quarter of the average in a few places, notably in the counties of Antrim, Armagh and Down. It was the driest December for many years at a number of widely separated stations, for example at Armagh since 1844, at Aberdeen since records began in 1912, and at Castle Kennedy (Wigtownshire) and Wye (Kent) since records began in 1924, although at Wye December 1930 was equally dry. Except for heavy rain in south-west England overnight on the 1st/2nd, many parts of the southern half of England had no measurable rainfall until the 18th while elsewhere during this period amounts of rain were generally small. Most districts had rain at times from the 18th to 23rd; it was heaviest in the north and west and at Achnagart (Ross and Cromarty) 118.8 mm of rain were recorded in the 24 hours beginning at 09 GMT on the 23rd. In general only small amounts of rain occurred during the last week but it was wet in the north Midlands on the 27th.

Snow

The incidence of snow or sleet (rain or drizzle and snow) over Scotland was much lower than average, except in the Shetland Islands where, together with most other areas of the United Kingdom, the number of days on which snow or sleet fell was about average. Apart from wintry showers in north Scotland around the 22nd there was virtually no snow until the last 5 days. From the 27th snow or sleet

showers occurred; they fell mainly in eastern and southern England but snow did not lie on the ground to any extent except on the 29th and 30th when 3–5 cm occurred in a few areas in East Anglia and south-east England.

Sunshine

In general sunshine amounts were below average except in a few places. Less than half the average sunshine was recorded in parts of north and south Scotland, Inverness and Marchmont (Berwickshire) having their dullest December since 1921 and 1934 respectively. It was very dull also in parts of north-west England and north Wales; Prestatyn (Flintshire) had its dullest December since records began in 1933. In contrast to the generally low sunshine values large parts of Yorkshire were much sunnier than average and Huddersfield recorded 206 per cent of average. Parts of the west Midlands were virtually sunless until the 13th and many places here and elsewhere recorded a total of 19 days during the month without sunshine.

Fog

During the first 9 days overnight fog occurred in England; it affected mostly eastern and southern areas and usually cleared during the morning. However, fog persisted throughout the day in parts of the Midlands and north-east England on the 1st, and in parts of the east Midlands and East Anglia on the 2nd, 3rd and 7th. Hill fog occurred in the Midlands and southern England overnight on the 22nd/23rd.

Miscellaneous phenomena

Observers in Scotland saw the aurora on 11 nights.

Table 1 District Values

December 1971

District	air temperature °C					mean 30 cm earth temp °C	rain days	rain- fall	sun- shine
	Highest Max. *	Lowest Min. *	max.	min.	mean				
	difference from average								
0 Scotland N	13.9	-2.6	+2.1	+2.0	+2.0	—	+1	119	80
1 Scotland E	14.0	-2.4	+2.6	+2.8	+2.7	+2.0	-4	51	74
2 England N E	15.0	-3.3	+2.0	+2.0	+2.0	+1.4	-6	47	98
3 England E	14.8	-1.5	+1.4	+2.0	+1.7	+1.5	-6	51	76
4 Midlands	14.3	-3.5	+1.5	+2.2	+1.9	+1.5	-7	49	89
5 England S E	14.5	-6.0	+1.2	+1.7	+1.5	+1.0	-9	31	73
6 Scotland W	13.8	-3.1	+2.2	+3.0	+2.6	+1.9	-3	66	83
7 Eng NW - Wales N	16.2	-4.5	+1.6	+2.4	+2.0	+1.9	-9	34	67
8 Eng SW - Wales S	14.4	-4.3	+0.8	+1.4	+1.1	+1.1	-9	48	65
N Ireland	14.8	-3.3	+1.9	+1.6	+1.7	—	-11	28	93
Scotland	14.0	-3.1	+2.3	+2.6	+2.4	—	-2	82	79
Eng - Wales	16.2	-6.0	+1.4	+1.9	+1.7	—	-8	44	79

* Highest max. and lowest min. of the District Value Stations.