

MONTHLY WEATHER REPORT

COMPILED FROM RETURNS OF OFFICIAL AND VOLUNTARY OBSERVERS

DECEMBER 1992

VOLUME 109

NUMBER 12

First half unsettled. Then anticyclonic with fog and frost.

December began with a strong south-westerly flow as fronts crossed the country. Controlled by a deep Icelandic low, a system passed the extreme south-west on the 4th. A complex sequence of troughs crossed all regions during the 6th but by the end of the 7th, a ridge had built over the country, and southern areas remained under its influence on the 9th and 10th, although fronts approached from the north-west later. These had cleared by noon on the 12th, as a ridge built from the south-west. From the 13th to the 15th, further fronts and strong winds affected all areas, but during the 16th, these systems moved eastwards leaving another ridge over the south. By the end of the 17th, a low near the Hebrides was pushing active systems across all areas. The month was then dominated by high pressure, stopping frontal activity until weak systems moved erratically across the country on the 31st.

Weather

Rain or showers, often heavy with hail and local thunder, affected many parts during the first four days. Blustery showers continued into the 5th, when ten people died in a series of accidents from Lancashire to Kent as a result of hail, rain or ice. Further rain swept eastwards during the 6th and 7th, depositing two inches in parts of southern Scotland. Thunder was reported from Dorset and Somerset. After a short cold dry spell, the middle of the month was again wet and windy with heavy rain and some snow in many areas before the high took charge for the last twelve days, bringing a sequence of cold foggy days and nights. Not until the 31st were there signs of milder weather. The freezing conditions brought many accidents. Seven people died on roads in the Midlands and northern England on the 21st, whilst on the 22nd two boys drowned walking on a frozen pond in Derbyshire.

Wind

The first 18 days of the month were windy, whilst the remainder had only light winds. On the 2nd, southern and western coasts of England and Wales had gales, with Culdrose and Camborne, both in Cornwall, having gusts of 73 and 74 knots, respectively. A man was blown into the sea at Blackpool on the 2nd and drowned. The west and north-west were breezy throughout, and the 14th was very windy in Scotland and north-east England. Gusts above 45 knots were widespread, including one of 61 knots at Leith, Lothian Region. The 17th saw strong southerly winds in many places, especially coasts. Butt of Lewis, Highland Region, reported a gust of 67 knots, and many other stations, especially in Northern Ireland and Scotland, had gusts over 60 knots. This continued into the 18th, when Peterhead, Grampian had a gust of 61 knots, and Salsburgh, Strathclyde, 65 knots. A tanker was blown onto rocks near Salcombe, Devon, and vehicles were overturned on the A48 in Gwent. Directions were southerly or south-westerly for the first 18 days, becoming variable or calm thereafter.

Temperature

Almost everywhere was colder than average, the greatest difference from average being -1.7°C at Faskally, Strathclyde Region. Three stations —

Goudhurst, Kent; Clacton, Essex; and Penwhim, Dumfries and Galloway had an exactly average monthly mean temperature. The anticyclonic spell towards the end of the month meant that temperatures stayed sub-zero in places for many days. Before that, some western areas had enjoyed above-average temperatures for several days. The highest temperature was $+14.6^{\circ}\text{C}$, at Betws-y-Coed, Gwynedd, on the 2nd, and at Colwyn Bay, Clwyd, on the 11th. The lowest temperature was -14.2°C , at Grantown-on-Spey, Highland Region, on the 21st.

Rainfall

Many northern and western areas were wetter than average, whilst remaining areas were drier. The highest percentage of average was 158% at Cape Wrath, Highland Region, whilst the lowest percentage of average was 49% at Ventnor Park, Isle of Wight. The three highest daily totals occurred on the 13th at stations in the Highland Region. They were: 119 mm at Knockanrock; 110 mm at Kinlochewe (which had a 48-hour total on 13th/14th of 167 mm); and 88 mm at Cassley. The heavy rain of the 1st–3rd compounded the problems of the previous month. Many rivers in South Wales and neighbouring English counties were still in flood, but the affected region had expanded considerably. There were countless landslips, flooded roads and properties, and massive disruption to transport. A policeman was killed by a passing car during torrential rain in Tyne and Wear on the 2nd, and heavy rain fell on the 6th in western districts, moving eastwards overnight. Rain fell in many parts on the 11th, heavy in Northern Ireland. Following downpours on the 18th, a canoeist perished in the swollen River Ogwen, Gwynedd, and there was a fatal accident on a waterlogged road in Gloucestershire.

Snow

Wintry showers fell in central and western Scotland, and over higher ground in England and Wales between the 3rd and 6th, closing some trans-Pennine roads. On the 15th and 16th, rain

and snow spread to much of northern and western Scotland, and Northern Ireland. The snow disrupted air and rail services, power cables were brought down and roads were blocked. The worst affected areas were around Aviemore, where 45 cm fell, Inverness (16 cm) and Aberdeen (9 cm). Wintry showers fell over Northern Ireland and central Scotland on the 18th, whilst on the 19th southern England had some wet snow. Further rain and snow reached north-western districts on the 21st.

Sunshine

Scottish sunshine values ranged from 150% of average at Wick, Highland Region, to below 60% in Dumfries and Galloway. Parts of central northern England had percentages well below 50, the lowest being 22% of average at Harrogate, North Yorkshire. The highest daily total was 7.1 hours at Bournemouth Airport on the 28th, whilst the highest monthly total was 80.0 hours at Dale Fort, Dyfed.

Fog

Mist and fog patches formed over central England early on the 7th, reforming 24 hours later. More extensive fog formed over north-west England and the south-east on the 9th and 10th, whilst the 11th saw south-west England affected by hill and coastal fog. Freezing fog in south-eastern England and the Midlands overnight on the 16th/17th persisted well into the 17th in places. Further freezing fog formed overnight on the 19th/20th, especially in central and north-western districts. This reformed the following night, and failed to clear during the 21st in places, notably the Vale of York and the north Midlands. Several serious road accidents occurred in this fog, and seven people died in three separate accidents in Derbyshire and Yorkshire. Freezing fog was prevalent in central areas for the rest of the month, and to a lesser extent elsewhere. The fog often persisted, causing serious delays at many airports, and general disruption to traffic.

Miscellaneous phenomena

None reported.

Table 1 District values

District	Air temperature °C					Mean 30 cm soil temp °C	Rain- days	Rainfall	Sun- shine
	Highest Max*	Lowest Min*	Max.	Min.	Mean				
			Difference from average					% of average	
0 Scotland N	11.8	-14.2	-0.6	-0.8	-0.7	-0.5	-2	124	107
1 Scotland E	12.4	-12.4	-0.9	-1.2	-1.1	-0.5	-5	77	99
2 England E & NE	12.8	-10.1	-0.9	-0.8	-0.8	0.0	-5	84	76
3 East Anglia	13.8	-7.9	-0.5	-0.6	-0.6	+0.5	-3	70	102
4 Midland Counties	13.6	-8.9	-1.0	-1.1	-1.0	+0.1	-6	82	72
5 England SE & Central S	14.2	-7.7	-0.6	-0.6	-0.6	+0.5	-3	93	104
6 Scotland W	11.7	-11.6	-0.8	-0.4	-0.6	-0.2	-1	88	71
7 England NW & Wales N	13.4	-8.7	-1.0	-1.2	-1.1	0.0	-3	97	99
8 England SW & Wales S	14.2	-6.0	-0.9	-0.6	-1.0	-0.1	-3	96	114
N Ireland	11.8	-7.3	-0.8	-0.8	-0.8	-0.1	-5	77	98
Scotland	12.4	-14.2	-0.8	-0.8	-0.8	-0.4	-3	101	92
England & Wales	14.2	-10.1	-0.8	-0.8	-0.9	+0.2	-4	88	95

* Highest maximum and lowest minimum of District Value Stations