

MONTHLY WEATHER REPORT

COMPILED FROM RETURNS OF OFFICIAL AND VOLUNTARY OBSERVERS

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Exceptionally mild; dull and wet in west, but sunny and dry in some eastern areas.

On New Year's Day a cold front advanced eastwards, introducing an unsettled spell during which frontal systems, associated with sometimes very deep depressions to the north, followed almost daily across the United Kingdom. Waving cold fronts remained over southern parts on the 3rd and over central areas on the 12th, the latter becoming particularly marked over the western Midlands early on the 13th as the precipitation turned to snow with a temperature drop of 9.3 °C within two hours at Elmdon Airport.

On the 17th a depression deepened rapidly as it moved past Shetland to Scandinavia. During the next few days a large anticyclone drifted from south-west of Ireland to central Europe. But on the 23rd the high pressure began to give way and for the rest of the month a succession of fronts crossed all districts from the Atlantic. Between the 28th and 30th a complex area of low pressure passed eastwards over the far north of Scotland while late on the 31st an intense depression advanced into Highland Region, its warm frontal zone bringing a temperature increase of 10 to 12 °C over many central and southern areas.

Weather

Apart from a few days around the end of the third week this was a very unsettled month with the strong westerly winds giving mostly dull, wet weather in the west, but brighter, drier conditions in the east. Although it was an exceptionally mild month generally wintry showers occurred rather frequently in the north. Scattered thunderstorms were reported on a number of occasions, particularly over northern Scotland between the 5th and 9th.

Wind

This was a very windy month, winds often being fresh or strong with gales, severe at times over exposed areas, particularly in the north and west, and even reaching storm force in places on several occasions, mostly between the 3rd and 9th, around mid-month and on the 31st. Gusts exceeded 70 kn at a number of stations, including 82 kn at Sumburgh, Shetland on the 9th, 80 kn at Lynemouth, Northumberland on the 17th and 101 kn on Lowther Hill, Dumfries and Galloway Region on the 31st. Considerable wind damage was reported in parts of central and southern England early on the 4th and to forests from Skye to Wester Ross on the 17th. On the 5th four people were drowned in a rescue attempt at Blackpool, Lancashire. On the 30th there were several rescues at sea in the south and on the 31st the Belfast-Liverpool ferry was cancelled. However, winds were lighter generally between the 19th and 26th. Wind directions were mostly from the south-westerly quarter except from the 13th to the 19th when they were mainly from between west and north-west.

Temperature

This was one of the mildest Januaries of the century and although not so mild generally as in 1975 Dumfries and Braemar, Highland Region had their mildest since 1916 and 1932 respectively. Mean temperatures ranged from more than 3 °C above average over much of England and at a few places in the south of Scotland and eastern Wales to less than 1 °C above here and there in the far north of Scotland and at Lizard, Cornwall.

The main spells of exceptionally mild weather occurred during the first two and a half weeks of the month and between the 24th and 28th. Highest maxima included 14.6 °C at Shawbury, Shropshire on the 5th, 14.4 °C at Eilanreach, Highland Region on the 23rd and 14.9 °C at Bude, Cornwall on the 26th and at Mepal, Cambridgeshire on the 27th. Nevertheless, there were some occasional quite cold days with night frost at times, mainly in the north, and while much of the frost was slight the temperature fell to -8.9 °C at Carnwath, Strathclyde Region and to -7.4 °C at Butser (Hillhampton), Hampshire on the 20th, and to -7.0 °C at Moydamlaght, Co. Londonderry on the 30th.

Rainfall

The rainfall distribution was typical of a pronounced westerly month with above-normal totals except in the extreme east of Scotland, most eastern areas of England, much of the southern and western Midlands and the eastern half of Northern Ireland, parts of central southern England, in the Channel Islands and here and there elsewhere. More than twice the average fell in some western areas, mainly over the higher ground and in particular over much of the Scottish Highlands. But in well-sheltered parts from near Aberdeen to Cleveland less than half the average was recorded.

While all districts had periods of rain or showers at times much of the rainfall was slight in sheltered central and eastern areas. However, it was mainly dry from the 14th in the south and east and from the 19th in the west and north until the 23rd. The rainfall was heavy on some occasions, especially in the west between the 2nd and 5th and from the 11th to the 13th, and more generally on the 31st. Among the large daily totals were 89.3 mm at Avon Dam, near Buckfastleigh, Devon on the 3rd and 93.0 mm at Capel Curig, Gwynedd on the 5th.

Snow

Despite the mildness of the month snow, mostly falling as showers, was not all that infrequent in the north, occurring on 22 days at Lerwick, Shetland, but

in the south it fell on a few occasions only. Except over the higher ground in the north amounts of snow were mostly slight and it rarely lay for any length of time. During the night of the 12/13th snow fell over parts of Wales and central England, closing some roads in Derbyshire for a time. On the 31st there was quite heavy snowfall with drifting in many central and northern parts; roads were blocked in some hilly areas but, except in the north, a rapid thaw followed.

Sunshine

Like that of the rainfall the sunshine distribution was very much a reflection of the frequent westerly winds, sheltered central and eastern parts of Britain generally having above-average totals while the west, including Northern Ireland, the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands, the far north and also parts of East Anglia, the south-eastern Midlands and Sussex had less than normal. It was exceptionally dull with less than half the average sunshine over much of north-western Scotland, Orkney and the extreme west of Wales. Valley/Holyhead, Anglesey with 24.5 hours and Kirkwall, Orkney with 6.9 hours had their lowest January totals since records began in 1914 and 1927 respectively, while Cape Wrath, Highland Region, a slightly sheltered site, recorded its monthly total of 0.5 hour on the 30th. But in parts of north-eastern England and east Scotland it was the sunniest January since 1959 with more than 150 per cent of average.

Fog

Hill fog occurred at times, particularly in the west of Britain during the first two and the last weeks of the month. Over coasts reports of fog were mostly in the south-west where it was rather widespread between the 25th and 27th. Overnight fog patches formed on a few occasions only, but were slow to clear in North Yorkshire and Durham on the 23rd.

Miscellaneous Phenomena

A minor tornado was reported to have caused slight damage at Eynsham, Oxfordshire on the 13th. Red dust was brought down by rain over Kent on the 26th.

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						
0 Scotland N	13.3	-5.0	+1.4	+1.3	+1.4	+1.0	+6	211	47
1 Scotland E	13.5	-5.4	+2.4	+2.7	+2.6	+1.5	+2	129	108
2 England E & NE	13.9	-5.5	+3.4	+2.8	+3.1	+1.8	0	98	135
3 East Anglia	14.2	-3.9	+3.5	+2.9	+3.2	+2.3	-1	84	110
4 Midland Counties	14.6	-4.6	+3.5	+3.2	+3.3	+2.2	+1	105	114
5 England SE & Central S	14.0	-4.1	+3.2	+3.5	+3.4	+2.4	-1	98	100
6 Scotland W	12.5	-3.7	+2.1	+2.5	+2.3	+1.8	+8	172	63
7 England NW & Wales N	14.4	-3.1	+2.5	+3.0	+2.7	+2.1	+5	149	78
8 England SW & Wales S	14.9	-4.5	+2.3	+2.7	+2.5	+2.0	+2	136	73
N Ireland	12.9	-1.5	+1.9	+1.8	+1.8	+1.3	+4	114	86
Scotland	13.5	-5.4	+2.0	+2.2	+2.1	+1.4	+5	171	73
England & Wales	14.9	-5.5	+3.1	+3.0	+3.0	+2.1	+1	112	102

* Highest maximum and lowest minimum of District Value Stations