

# Monthly Weather Report

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SUMMARY OF OBSERVATIONS COMPILED FROM RETURNS OF OFFICIAL STATIONS AND VOLUNTEER OBSERVERS

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### January 1955—Wintry for three weeks, then mild.

During the first three weeks there were two wintry spells, each lasting about a week, with a brief mild period between: the first, with mainly easterly winds; was associated with a persistent anticyclone near Scandinavia bringing cold air from the continent over the British Isles; the second was due to an outflow of polar air from the north round low pressure systems in the Scandinavian region. Mild Atlantic air predominated for the remainder of the month.

Cold air with easterly winds spread across the whole country on the 1st; it was mainly dull and cold with a few light snow showers, until on the 4th a complex low pressure system settled in the Bay of Biscay and associated fronts brought prolonged snowfall to most of England and Wales with hail and thunder in the south-west. However, with day temperatures rising to around 40°F. by the end of the week, a thaw set in quickly and the next few days were mainly quiet and cloudy with some local mist or fog. By the 10th mild air from the Atlantic brought dull skies but temperatures above 50°F. over most of England and Wales; the mild weather was short-lived, however, as an influx of polar air during the night reduced the general level of temperature by 10–15°F.; the cold spell which followed lasted over a week. This change was preceded by widespread rain followed by snow. On the night of the 13th–14th a belt of snow crossed southern England, and the following morning snow was lying 4 to 8 in. deep in most parts of London. Some parts of eastern England had no sunshine for the first thirteen days of the month. Although it was fair generally on the 14th it was intensely cold, especially in Scotland where the temperature at Dalwhinnie only reached 15°F. during the day and fell to –5°F. that night; temperatures also fell to 10°F. as far south as Bristol. During the 16th a vigorous depression moved east across southern districts: in the London area there was an unusual concentration of smoke giving almost complete darkness for a short period in the early afternoon; this subsequently moved away southward with the associated cold front. On the north side of the depression there were strong winds and widespread snow and rain over England, Wales and Northern Ireland, while in Scotland there were frequent snow showers in the cold northerly winds; many villages in the extreme north were isolated for more than a week owing to severe drifting. A weak ridge of high pressure settled over the country on the 19th and, after a mainly sunny day, screen temperatures over the snow-covered ground fell to as low as 9°F. at Elmdon, Birmingham and 7°F. at Dyce. On the 20th and 21st an influx of mild air from the south-west brought rain, fog and a rapid thaw over practically the whole country. For most of the remainder of the month the highest pressure was over central Europe and weak frontal systems moved north-east across the British Isles giving mild cloudy weather, with one or two sunny days in most districts.

**Pressure and Wind.**—Mean pressure was substantially below the average for the period 1921–50, the deviation at 9h. ranging from +0.6 mb. at Stornoway to –9.5 mb. at Scilly. Winds predominated from an easterly point during the first week, from mainly between north and north-west from the 11th to 20th and from between south and south-west from the 24th to the end of the month. Gales occurred in Scotland on 16 days and in England and Wales on the 3rd–5th, 12th, 16th and 29th; they were widespread on the 4th and 16th. Among the highest gusts registered, in knots, were 70 at Tiree on the 12th and 72 at Lizard on the 16th.

**Temperature.**—Mean temperature differed from the average for the period 1921–50 by –2.3°F. in England and Wales, –3.1°F. in

Scotland and –3.0°F. in Northern Ireland. It was very cold in England and Wales from the 1st to the 8th and in the British Isles generally from the 10th to the 20th, being intensely cold locally on the 14th, 15th, 17th, 18th and 20th. The last week of the month was mild and almost spring-like in places especially from the 28th to the 30th when temperatures rose above 54°F. over a wide area in England and Wales and in one or two places in Scotland.

Extreme temperatures included:—(England and Wales) 57°F. at Aber on the 28th, 4°F. at Moor House on the 14th, at Droitwich on the 18th and at Halstead where it was the lowest January temperature since 1947 on the 20th; (Scotland) 58°F. at Kelso on the 28th, –5°F. at Dalwhinnie on the 15th; (Northern Ireland) 54°F. at Ballykelly on the 24th, 10°F. at Garvagh on the 14th and 20th.

**Precipitation.**—The general precipitation expressed as a percentage of the average for the period 1881–1915 was 114 over England and Wales, 75 over Scotland and 125 over Northern Ireland. In Scotland the totals were generally about two-thirds of the average, while less than half the average occurred in Inverness-shire. In England and Wales north of an irregular line from Pembroke to about central Lincolnshire there was less than the average except in parts of north Wales, Northumberland and Durham. Rainfall was more than one and a half times the average over most of Sussex, Kent and the southern parts of Somerset, Devonshire and Cornwall.

Among the heavier falls in 24 hours or less were:—

9th 4.07 in. at Borrowdale, Cumberland, 3.65 in. at Watendlath, Cumberland, 3.57 in. at Wet Sleddale, Westmorland, and 3.02 in. at Thirlmere, Cumberland.

13th 2.19 in. at Ashburton, Devonshire, and 2.15 in. at Totnes, Devonshire.

Thunderstorms occurred locally on the 17th and 18th and extensively in Devonshire and Cornwall on the 4th.

**Snow.**—Snow and sleet fell in most areas of Scotland from the 10th to the 18th, the north-east having the greatest depth—about 18 in. of level snow. Drifts up to 30 ft. were reported. Large areas in the north of Scotland were snowbound. Trains had to be dug out of drifts and supplies dropped from aircraft to farms and villages. In England and Wales snow or sleet occurred fairly frequently up to the 19th and was widespread on the 4th, 5th, 15th and 18th. It was lying to a depth of 6–9 in. in many districts on the 17th.

**Sunshine.**—The general sunshine expressed as a percentage of the average for the period 1921–50 was 77 over England and Wales, 115 over Scotland and 116 over Northern Ireland. Sunshine was below the average over southern, eastern and midland districts of England, particularly in the south-east where many places had little more than half the average. Wales had slightly less than the average. Scotland received more than the average in most places except in the east and north. Craibstone near Aberdeen had its dullest January since 1941.

**Fog.**—In Scotland early morning fog occurred at one place or another on 21 days and in England and Wales it was fairly frequent night and morning from the 11th onwards, persisting all day locally on the 12th, 15th and 16th.

**Miscellaneous Phenomena.**—The aurora was observed in Scotland on 14 nights.