

Monthly Weather Report

OF THE METEOROLOGICAL OFFICE

 Price 2s. 0d. net
 Post Free 2s. 1½d.

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

VOL. 69 No. 12

PUBLISHED BY HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE

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December 1952—Mainly cold; widespread snow around the middle of the month.

The weather was mainly cold with frequent showers of snow and sleet. Snow was widespread and heavy locally around the middle of the month. Other notable features were the long spell of smoke laden fog in the London area from the 5th to the 9th and the widespread severe north-westerly gale on the 17th.

In the opening days of the month a ridge of high pressure associated with an anticyclone situated south of Iceland moved south over the British Isles. Frost and local fog occurred, the frost being severe in some places. The snow which fell at the end of November was still lying over considerable areas. A trough of low pressure moving south-east immediately behind the ridge caused slight rain in the north and east. From the 3rd to the 5th the anticyclone off our north-west coasts moved south-east, being centred over south-east England and the nearby continent on the 6th. Cold mainly dry weather with frost and local fog persisted, though a trough of low pressure spreading east brought milder weather with occasional rain to some western districts on the 6th and 7th. These conditions did not reach the south-east, however, until the 9th or 10th. In the London area the fog was smoke laden and unusually persistent. On the 10th a depression off the west of Scotland moved north-east giving rain in most places and a gale locally on our north-west coasts. On the 11th and 12th a depression off south-east Iceland moving south-south-east gave showery weather, and on the 12th another disturbance off our south-west coasts moved rapidly east causing further rain. Behind these depressions cold northerly winds prevailed, with a gale locally in the north of Scotland and widespread snow which was heavy in places. Thunderstorms occurred at numerous places in England and Wales on the 15th. On the 16th a very deep depression off north-west Scotland moved east-south-east and later turned south-east giving considerable precipitation on the 16th and widespread, notably severe north-westerly gales on the 17th. The depression filled quickly over the Low Countries and a milder, unsettled south-westerly to westerly type was established and persisted until the 25th. Rain fell frequently during this period but temperature rose to 50°F. locally at times. From the 25th to the 28th a depression moved south-south-east from southward of Iceland to south-west France; the weather became colder again with some rain or snow. Rather widespread fog occurred on the 27th, the fog being thick and persistent locally in south-east and east England and the Midlands. During the closing days a depression moved south-south-east from east of Iceland to the North Sea; more rain or sleet occurred and there was rather persistent fog at some places in south-east and east England on the 30th.

Pressure and Wind.—Mean pressure somewhat exceeded the average at most places but locally in the east it was slightly below the average. Winds from some westerly point predominated but northerly winds were also rather frequent. The total run of the wind was appreciably below the average. Gales occurred locally, mainly on the 10th, 12th–18th, 20th, 23rd, 24th, 27th, 28th and 31st. The gale of the 16th–18th was widespread and unusually severe. Among the highest gusts registered, in knots, were 96 at Cranwell (the highest on record at any inland station in the British Isles), 80 at Stornoway, 79 at Tiree and Fleetwood and 76 at Sellafield, all on the 17th.

Temperature.—Mean temperature was below the average for the period 1906–35 by 2.5°F. in England and Wales, 1.8°F. in Scotland and 2.5°F. in Northern Ireland. The first week was mainly cold; temperature rose in the west on the 6th or 7th but these conditions did not reach south-east England until the 9th or 10th. The milder spell was only temporary, cold weather returning on the 12th. Another rather mild spell occurred in most parts from the 19th to the 25th but the rest of the month was cold. Among low maximum temperatures were 28°F. at Dishforth on the 5th, 29°F. at London

Airport on the 6th and 26°F. at Glenlivet and 27°F. at Glenmore Lodge on the 14th.

Extreme temperatures for the month included:—(England and Wales) 56°F. at Aber on the 8th and 22nd, at Gulval on the 9th and at Cannington on the 22nd, 15°F. at Luton on the 5th; (Scotland) 57°F. at Forres on the 8th, 7°F. at Glenlivet on the 15th; (Northern Ireland) 53°F. at Castlerock on the 8th and 22nd and at Armagh on the 22nd, 16°F. at Garvagh on the 1st.

Precipitation.—The general precipitation expressed as a percentage of the average for the period 1881–1915 was 93 over England and Wales, 94 over Scotland and 111 over Northern Ireland. In Scotland more than the average occurred in the extreme north, in Banffshire and the adjacent part of Aberdeenshire, in the extreme south-east and in part of Argyllshire; less than the average occurred at most places elsewhere, the deficiency being greatest in Perthshire and locally on the south-east coast of Ayrshire. In England and Wales more than the average was received in Lancashire and the neighbouring parts of North Wales and the north-west Midlands, in some coastal areas in north-east, east and south-east England and in a few scattered areas elsewhere; less than 75 per cent. of the average occurred over much of a mainly inland area extending from the North Riding of Yorkshire to the Wash, in south-east Wales and the Bristol Channel area and locally in Devon. In Northern Ireland less than the average was confined to the extreme south-west and south-east of the Province, percentages of the average ranging from 83 at Newtownbutler to 132 at Londonderry.

Among the heavier falls in 24 hours were:—

8th 2.51 in. at Rothesay.

16th 2.66 at Inverinan, Loch Awe and 2.50 in. at Kingairloch (Argyllshire).

Snow.—Local showers of snow or sleet occurred rather frequently from the 13th to the end of the month, the snow being widespread and heavy in places around the middle of the month. The depth of snow reached 8 in. at Welshpool on the 14th, 8 in. in the Outer Hebrides and 12 in. at West Kirby by the 15th and 7 in. at Edgbaston, Birmingham and 16 in. at Bwlchgwyn by the 16th. Strong winds caused deep drifts locally; for example, drifts 15 ft. were reported in the Island of Skye and farms and villages in the Orkney and Shetland Islands were isolated for a time. Drifts five to seven feet deep were recorded at Bwlchgwyn, Denbighshire on the 15th.

Thunderstorms occurred locally on the 15th–17th, 20th, 23rd–25th, 28th and 31st; they were most widespread in England and Wales on the 15th.

Sunshine.—The general sunshine expressed as a percentage of the average for the period 1906–35 was 132 in England and Wales, 106 in Scotland and 103 in Northern Ireland. In England and Wales an excess occurred almost everywhere except in parts of north-west England and north Wales and at a few towns in the Midlands; at Dunstable it was the sunniest December since records began in 1941 and at Oxford the sunniest in a record going back to 1881. On the other hand in north-west Scotland it was very dull; at Duntulm, Island of Skye, it was the duller December since records started in 1934.

Fog.—Fog occurred frequently in eastern districts of England and in the neighbourhood of large towns. It was thick and persistent in the Clyde area on the 1st and 4th. The most notable fog occurred in the London area from the 5th to the 9th; at Kingsway it lasted from 0 h. on the 5th to 18 h. on the 9th and was thick from 9 h. on the 6th to 9 h. on the 8th.

Miscellaneous Phenomena.—The aurora was observed in Scotland on seven nights. Solar halos were noted at Oxford on 11 days. A sun pillar was seen at Oxford on the 27th.

*NOTE: As from the January 1953 issue, the price of the Monthly Weather Report will be 2/- net; Annual Summary, 4/- net; Annual Subscription including Annual Summary and Introduction, 30/- post free.