

MONTHLY WEATHER REPORT

COMPILED FROM RETURNS OF OFFICIAL AND VOLUNTARY OBSERVERS

JANUARY 1973

VOLUME 90

NUMBER 1

Dull, and mostly mild; a few wintry spells.

Activity on slow-moving fronts over the north and north-west of the British Isles died out during the first four days as an intensifying anti-cyclone moved north-eastwards from the Bay of Biscay. The high-pressure centre remained over or near the British Isles until the 10th and then moved slowly away south-eastwards. From the 13th onwards depressions or troughs of low pressure from the Atlantic periodically crossed the country but most of these were weak except in the north-west.

Weather

Low cloud, mist and fog, with slight rain or drizzle prevailed until the 14th, and many areas were again foggy between the 16th and the 19th. Over most of the second half of the month, however, it was cloudy in all areas with occasional rain or showers. Rainfall was rarely heavy, but hail fell at times and there were a few reports of thunder. Snow was also mostly light and, although falls were heavier and more extensive from the 19th to the 21st, the snow did not lie for very long.

Wind

In Northern Ireland and in northern and western areas of Great Britain winds were often fresh or strong, but the number of days on which gales occurred was generally less than average. In other areas there were even fewer days of strong or gale force winds. On the 15th some of the higher gusts measured were: 75 kt at Macrihanish (Argyll), 74 kt at Belfast Harbour and 67 kt at Prestwick. On the 19th Tiree (Argyll) recorded a gust of 63 kt.

Temperature

In most areas mean temperatures were between 0.5 and 2 deg C above average. However, in Shetland, Lerwick reported a mean temperature as much as 2.6 deg C higher than average. At a few places in south-east and south-west England and the Channel Islands mean temperatures were near or a little below average. Some of the higher temperatures were measured during the first few days and towards the end of the month; West Kirby Park (Cheshire) had a maximum of 16.0°C on the 1st and on the 29th Totnes (Devon) reported 14.9°C. England and Wales experienced a few cold days during the second week, and the third week was also cold in many parts of Scotland, north England, and the Midlands. Frosts were frequent and locally severe and, in areas affected by persistent fog or very low cloud, it remained cold throughout the day. Indeed, on the 17th and 18th temperatures were continuously below freezing point in a few places in south Scotland. On the 7th Hartlepool reported a minimum of -9.5°C and at Grantown-on-Spey (Moray) (229 m) on the 19th the temperature fell to -12.2°C.

Rainfall (including melted snow)

Rainfall in Northern Ireland varied from about 70% to 150% of average with many places reporting more than 100%. Elsewhere in the United Kingdom it was rather dry except in parts of west Scotland and south-west England where the rainfall was near or a little above average. There were large variations in all areas but the driest places were in the east. Some of these recorded less than a quarter of average and had their driest January for a number of years: 19 mm was the smallest January rainfall at Kelso (Roxburghshire) since 1905, while at Writtle (Essex), 10 mm was the least total measured in any January since 1941. Most of the rain fell during the first few days and from the 13th to the 31st. There were occasional hail showers and snow at times on high ground. The 18th to the 21st was a particularly wet period in the west and north and the 19th was outstanding for some heavy falls, especially in Northern Ireland where parts of Co. Armagh and Co. Down were subjected to serious flooding. In the 24 hours commencing 09 GMT on the 19th, Castle Wellan (Co. Down) and Timpany (Co. Down) recorded 'daily' falls of 114.6 mm and 100.8 mm respectively. Also on the 19th Rhuvall (Argyllshire) had a 'daily' fall of 91.6 mm and Cudrose (Cornwall), a 'daily' fall of 53.0 mm.

Snow

Although a little snow fell in most areas throughout the month, the most extensive falls took place during the period from the 19th to the 21st. Areas affected were Wales, the high ground in west and north England, and in south and west Scotland. Snow made driving on many mountain roads very hazardous and there were further difficulties on the 21st when strong gusty winds caused drifts which blocked roads for a time in the Pennines, the Lake District and in south Scotland. It was too warm for snow to accumulate to any great depth or to lie

for very long, nevertheless, undrifted depths of 25 cm and over were measured at a number of higher level stations: 44 cm were measured at Moor House (Westmorland) on the 22nd, and 35 cm at Ashintully Castle (Perthshire) on the 21st.

Sunshine

In parts of south-west England, north and west Scotland and in much of Northern Ireland sunshine totals were less than a half of average, and a number of stations reported the dullest January on record. The month's total of 7.4 hours at Helensburgh (Dunbartonshire) was the lowest there since records began in 1912. Elsewhere sunshine totals were variable but mostly below average, except in small areas of north and east Scotland, north-west England and north Wales where some places had a little more than average sunshine. There were one or two sunny days in many places: Folkstone had 8.3 hours of sunshine on the 31st, Aberporth (Cardiganshire) had 7.2 hours on the 6th, and Leuchars (Fife) had 6.9 hours on the 17th.

Fog

From the 1st to the 13th and from the 16th to the 18th extensive fog occurred frequently except in Northern Ireland and in the north of Scotland. It affected both the hills and lower ground and was dense, persistent, and freezing in patches especially in the Midlands and eastern districts of Scotland and England. The fog seriously interfered with surface and air transport on a few days. After the 18th fog was reported much less frequently and, although extensive at times, it did not persist.

Miscellaneous Phenomena

On the 21st, a waterspout was observed off Newhaven (Sussex). The aurora was seen by observers in Scotland on 11 nights.

Table 1 District values
January 1973

District	air temperature °C					mean 30-cm earth temp °C	rain- days	rainfall	sun- shine
	Highest	Lowest	max.	min.	mean				
	Max. †	Min. †	difference from average						
0 Scotland N	11.5	-1.8	+1.6	+1.9	+1.7	—	-5	65	77
1 Scotland E	12.0	-6.0	+1.2	+1.6	+1.4	+1.2	-5	57	91
2 England N E	11.9	-5.6	+0.7	+1.3	+1.1	+1.2	-2	43	80
3 England E	11.5	-2.7	+0.6	+1.4	+1.0	+1.2	-5	29	68
4 Midland Counties	14.1	-4.3	+0.6	+1.5	+1.1	+0.9	-5	45	83
5 England S E	11.7	-5.7	+0.5	+1.0	+0.7	+0.4	-8	42	59
6 Scotland W	11.2	-9.6	+0.7	+1.6	+1.2	+1.2	-2	82	57
7 Eng N W & Wales N	12.0	-7.2	+0.6	+1.4	+1.0	+1.1	-5	61	87
8 Eng S W & Wales S	13.1	-4.0	+0.3	+1.2	+0.8	+0.9	-5	58	54
N Ireland	12.6	-8.6	+1.1	+1.8	+1.5	—	-1	100	46
Scotland	12.0	-9.6	+1.1	+1.7	+1.4	—	-4	67	75
England & Wales	14.1	-7.2	+0.5	+1.3	+0.9	—	-5	48	72

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