

MONTHLY WEATHER REPORT

COMPILED FROM RETURNS OF OFFICIAL AND VOLUNTARY OBSERVERS

JANUARY 1984

VOLUME 101

NUMBER 1

Cold with heavy snowfall in north, but mild and wet in south; stormy.

For much of the month a succession of frontal systems moved, generally in an easterly direction, across all districts while several associated depressions passed over or close to the United Kingdom. Particularly intense lows crossed Scotland during the nights of the 2nd/3rd, 11th/12th, 12th/13th and on the 14th and 16th, while late on the 21st another turned northwards to the west of that country. Further deep depressions moved across central districts on the 23rd and into the south-west approaches on the 25th, the latter filling as it came up the English Channel on the 27th. Between the 18th and 20th, however, an intensifying anticyclone advanced from west of Ireland to Scandinavia.

Weather

Unsettled, stormy weather prevailed, almost without interruption, throughout the month, the north being generally cold with considerable snowfall at times and the south mostly mild and wet. Nevertheless, south-eastern districts were unusually sunny. Thunderstorms were reported somewhere in the United Kingdom on most days of the month, occurring rather widely at times, especially on the 3rd, in the west between the 11th and 15th and in the south on the 26th.

Wind

It was a very windy month with severe gales at times in exposed areas, especially in the north and west where storm force and even hurricane force winds occurred in places during the first three days, from the 11th to the 16th and between the 21st and 23rd. Some of the highest gusts ever recorded in the United Kingdom included 90 kn at Benbecula, Western Isles, and Duirinish, Highland Region, on the 3rd and 85 kn at Gwennap Head, Cornwall, on the 23rd. At some upland stations even higher values were recorded, for example, 118 kn on Lowther Hill, Strathclyde Region, on the 13th. Wind directions were generally from a westerly point, but between the 20th and 27th they were mainly in an easterly quarter.

The high winds caused widespread structural damage and brought down power lines in places, particularly when combined with heavy snowfall in the north of Scotland, while on the 13th a 114 metre-high cooling tower collapsed at a power station near Widnes, Cheshire. Large numbers of trees were uprooted, especially in the north-west. Several people were killed, mostly by falling trees. Around the coasts there were a number of heroic rescues by helicopter and lifeboat crews, but on the 23rd 17 of a company of 26 were lost when a cargo ship sank off Guernsey while on the 13th a Belgian trawler and her crew of five disappeared off North Yorkshire.

Temperature

Mean temperatures were generally above the monthly average over the southern half of and in parts of north-west England, and in Wales, but below normal elsewhere. Anomalies ranged from rather more than 1 °C above average in parts of the south of England to more than 2 °C below over much of northern Scotland and locally in Northern Ireland.

Except for about a week from the 17th, when it was rather cold, the south was mostly mild. The

north was occasionally mild until the 12th, but then generally cold for two weeks. Frost was occasionally severe in places between the 18th and 26th, mainly in the Highlands with minima of -23.6 °C at Grantown-on-Spey and -23.5 °C at Lagganlia on the 20th. However, on the 12th/13th temperatures exceeded 13 °C in parts of England, Wales and Northern Ireland with 16.5 °C at Colwyn Bay, Clwyd.

Rainfall

Monthly rainfall totals, including the water equivalent of considerable snowfall in the north, were above normal in all districts with scattered areas having more than twice the average. Generally, it was the wettest January this century in Northern Ireland, since 1948 in England, 1974 in Wales and 1975 in Scotland. Mount Batten, Plymouth, had its wettest since records began in 1921. Only locally in the far north-west of Highland Region was there near-average rainfall.

Showers or longer periods of precipitation occurred frequently. Rainfall was heavy at times, especially in the west on the 2nd and between the 10th and 16th, with 98.0 mm at Cwm Dyli in Snowdonia on the 10th, and in the south-west from the 21st to the 27th. Flooding was particularly bad in Devon and Somerset on the 27th. However, rainfall amounts were mostly small between the 4th and 10th over England, except in the south-west and north-west and during the last two weeks in north-eastern Scotland near the Moray Firth.

Snow

Snow, often showery in nature, fell on each day of the month, except on the 10th, in the north and on a number of occasions in the south. Longer periods of snow occurred mainly over high ground in Scotland around mid-month and in most areas between the 21st and 26th. While snow lay for much of the month in the north some parts, mainly in southern England and coastal Wales, had none. The snowfall was heavy at times, especially over Scotland and Northern Ireland on the 3rd and from the 13th to the 16th, and in central and northern districts between the 22nd and 24th, with accumulations of

15 to 30 cm in many inland areas and more than 60 cm at some places in the Central Highlands, the Southern Uplands and northern Pennines; that of 112 cm at Leadhills, Strathclyde Region, on the 27th was the greatest depth in Scotland for at least 40 years. Considerable disruption to transport was caused at times, especially by drifting snow, and several deaths from exposure were reported. A particularly severe blizzard in Scotland on the 21st and 22nd trapped four trains in the Highlands and 2500 skiers at Glenshee, Perthshire. Much of the snow over lower ground thawed during the last five days.

Sunshine

Sunshine totals were above the monthly normal over England and Wales, except in scattered areas in the west and north, and in parts of eastern Scotland, including Shetland, Northern Ireland, the Isle of Man and Guernsey. More than 150 per cent of average was recorded at many places in the Midlands, East Anglia, central southern and south-east England with Greater London enjoying its sunniest January in more than 100 years of records. Elsewhere, sunshine was below normal with less than 75 per cent of average in parts of Scotland, mainly in Highland Region, and at a few places in North Wales and Co. Antrim. The south-east was particularly sunny between the 12th and 21st while most of the sunshine in the dull north-west occurred during the second half of the month.

Fog

Hill fog occurred at times and fog also occasionally affected south-western coasts during the first two weeks and formed overnight in places, mainly in central and northern areas, during the second half of the month. On the 27th and 28th, however, fog was widespread in central and eastern parts of Great Britain.

Miscellaneous Phenomena

Tornadoes damaged more than 100 houses at Bessacarr and Cantley, Doncaster, on the 14th and ripped the roofs of at least 21 buildings in Teignmouth, Devon, on the 26th with golf-ball-sized hailstones also causing damage in the town.

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	12.2	-23.5	-1.5	-2.3	-1.9	-0.4	+4	147	86
1 Scotland E	12.4	-21.3	-1.7	-1.8	-1.7	+0.5	+4	175	105
2 England E & NE	13.0	-10.2	-0.3	-0.4	-0.4	+0.2	+5	170	117
3 East Anglia	13.1	-7.5	+0.7	-0.1	+0.2	+0.6	+4	163	160
4 Midland Counties	13.0	-7.5	+0.4	-0.1	+0.2	+0.5	+5	157	139
5 England SE & Central S	13.6	-4.7	+1.3	+0.5	+0.9	+0.8	+5	185	165
6 Scotland W	11.7	-19.5	-1.1	-1.1	-1.0	+0.3	+6	162	83
7 England NW & Wales N	12.9	-7.2	-0.1	-0.1	-0.1	+0.3	+6	163	103
8 England SW & Wales S	13.8	-6.8	+1.0	+0.2	+0.4	+0.7	+8	175	110
N Ireland	12.6	-10.8	-1.1	-1.6	-1.3	+0.1	+5	171	93
Scotland	12.4	-23.5	-1.4	-1.7	-1.5	+0.1	+5	158	91
England & Wales	13.8	-10.2	+0.5	0.0	+0.2	+0.5	+5	169	132

* Highest maximum and lowest minimum of District Value Stations