

Monthly Weather Report

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OF THE METEOROLOGICAL OFFICE

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February 1959—*Exceptionally dry. Cold and foggy becoming very mild later*

Over southern areas of the British Isles anticyclones dominated the weather throughout the month giving exceptionally dry weather. It was cold and foggy for the most part but very mild during the last week. In northern areas it was anticyclonic at first but the second half of the month was predominantly westerly in character.

The anticyclone centred over the country at the end of January persisted with little change until the 4th. Winds were easterly over southern districts but light and variable over Scotland, and, although there were a few sleet showers in east and south-east England on the 2nd, weather was predominantly dry and cold but with a good deal of sunshine. In the Glasgow area fog and frost persisted day and night almost without a break until early on the 4th. Frost was severe in places; screen temperature on the 4th fell to 0°F. at Kincaig and to 1°F. at Grantown-on-Spey.

The anticyclone became centred over eastern Europe until the 14th but the British Isles remained in its circulation for the most part, though south-westerlies succeeded in penetrating to Ireland, Scotland and northern England by 13th. Subsequently the anticyclone developed westwards, being centred over our southern districts during 17th–19th. Although winds had reached gale force locally in south-west England on 4th, they were mostly light and variable throughout the period in central, eastern and southern England where fog formed locally on 4th and occurred in many districts every day until the 19th. Fog was particularly widespread on 6th and during 16th–19th. Temperature was below average, even where there was little or no fog. Although there was some rain here and there in south-west England (particularly on the 9th) and in Scotland, weather was generally dry, but dull and gloomy.

On the 20th the anticyclone was centred over our South-west Approaches and a north-westerly airstream, associated with a deep depression over Scandinavia, swept across the British Isles. Temperatures fell in northern districts; in Scotland the showers turned to snow. Wind reached gale force in parts of Scotland and northern England; at several places in northern Scotland gusts exceeded 60 kt. This polar outbreak was short-lived and the following day milder air from the Atlantic brought cloudy weather with rain or drizzle to most districts. By the 22nd day temperature everywhere was above average; it reached 62°F. at Usk, Monmouthshire, and 55°F. at Perth.

On the 22nd and 23rd the anticyclone moved slowly eastwards again to northern France subsequently becoming situated over central Europe by the end of the month. Winds were south-westerly during the last six days, light in the south-east but reaching gale force at times in Scotland and northern England. Weak troughs of low pressure brought occasional rain to some western and northern districts, but in the east and south-east it remained mostly dry. The last few days of the month were particularly mild; temperature reached 60°F. locally in the Moray Firth area on the 25th and 65°F. in east and south-east England on the 28th.

Pressure and Wind. Pressure was considerably above the 1921–50 average everywhere, the excess at 9h. ranging from 13.6 mb. at Stornoway to 17.8 mb. at Spurn Head. At the beginning of the month pressure over the British Isles was close to 1040 mb. Winds were mainly easterly in the south and light and variable in the north until the 4th, becoming predominantly south-westerly in Scotland and light and variable in England and Wales until the 19th. North-westerly winds on the 20th and 21st were followed by south-westerlies which persisted until the end of the month. Wind reached gale force on 19 days in Scotland and 13 days in England and Wales; gales were most frequent in the west and north and more frequent after the 19th than earlier in the month.

Temperature. Mean temperature was 0.5°F. above the 1921–50 average

in England and Wales, 1.1°F. above in Scotland and 2.1°F. above in Northern Ireland. In England and Wales temperature during the first three weeks of the month was generally below the average, but unusually mild weather during the last week brought mean temperature for the month slightly above the average. At Ross-on-Wye temperature reached 60°F. on both the 27th and 28th; no previous February has had two days with 60°F. since records began at this station in 1874. Over most of Scotland severe frosts and the persistence of fog during the first part of the month brought mean temperature down to within 1°F. of the average; at some places in the Central Highlands and around the Clyde Estuary mean temperature for the month was below average. In the Western Isles it was mild with mean temperature 2–3°F. above the average.

Extreme temperatures included:—(England and Wales) 66°F. at Greenwich on the 28th, 14°F. at Moor House on the 3rd; (Scotland) 61°F. at Banff on the 27th and 28th, 0°F. at Kincaig on the 4th; (Northern Ireland) 56°F. at Garvagh on the 16th, 18°F. at Garvagh on the 3rd.

Precipitation. An exceptionally dry month with general precipitation, expressed as a percentage of the 1916–50 average, only 14 per cent. in England and Wales, 43 per cent. in Scotland and 38 per cent. in Northern Ireland. Parts of Kent and Sussex had no measurable rain throughout the month and large areas of the Midlands and south-east England had less than five per cent. Half the average was exceeded in the Lake District, over the greater part of Lanarkshire and Ayrshire, over northern Argyllshire and western Inverness-shire. In England and Wales there has been only one drier February, that of 1891, since comparable records began in 1865, although 1921 was as dry. A number of places had their driest February in a long series of unbroken records; at Wellingborough and Goldington, for example, since 1891 and at Kew Observatory since 1866. In the east of Scotland some places had no measurable rain until the 19th. At Wick it was the driest February since 1866 and at Gordon Castle since 1878.

Snow covered the ground in many parts of northern Scotland during the first half of the month, and snow and sleet showers were widespread on the 20th and 21st, depths of 1 in. being reported in places.

Thunder was heard on one day in Scotland but was not reported in England and Wales.

Sunshine. The general sunshine expressed as a percentage of the 1921–50 average was 90 in England and Wales, 102 in Scotland and 95 in Northern Ireland. Weather was unusually dull from about 5th to 18th, especially in the Midlands, north-east England and the Glasgow area. Some places had no sunshine at all for 13 days. Sunshine was above the average north of a line from Aberdeen to Oban; at Gordon Castle, with 177 per cent. of the average, it was the sunniest February since records began in 1909. In contrast Renfrew had only 28 per cent. of its average and at Paisley, with only 35 per cent. it was the dullest February since records began there in 1885. The last days of the month were brilliantly sunny; on the 28th both Long Sutton and South Farnborough recorded more than 10 hr. sunshine and Kew with 9.6 hr. had its sunniest February day since records began there in 1881.

Fog. Fog occurred at one place or other in Scotland on 1st–17th, 19th–24th and 27th and every day in England and Wales except the 28th. It was most widespread between 5th and 19th persisting during the afternoon at many places. Fog was reported on 17 and 18 days at Durham and Wye respectively.

Miscellaneous Phenomena. The aurora was seen on 18 nights in Scotland and as far south as Aldergrove on the night of the 25/26th.