

Monthly Weather Report

OF THE METEOROLOGICAL OFFICE

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

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January 1954—Changeable; very cold from 23rd to the 31st; severe gale on 15th.

For the first ten days the general type of weather was northerly; subsequently an unsettled westerly type prevailed, for the most part, until the 20th. South-easterly winds set in on the 22nd, later becoming easterly and finally north-easterly.

On the 1st a large anticyclone was centred over south-west Ireland; this moved westward while a ridge to the north of it swung east resulting in rather cold north to north-east winds over most of Great Britain. There was another outbreak of northerly winds on the 6th and an occlusion broke through the ridge; wet snow fell over much of England and Wales and wintry showers in Scotland and Northern Ireland. Frost followed, and frozen snow and ice affected many areas for 48 hours; on the 8th a screen minimum of 8°F. was registered at Houghall, in County Durham. Later on the 8th milder air came round the anticyclone centred off south-west Ireland giving a general thaw; a rather mild north-westerly current lasted until the 11th, with scattered slight rain or showers. An unsettled, mostly mild, south-westerly type of weather, with rain at times, set in on the 12th culminating in a widespread severe gale on the 15th. The westerly wind, of long fetch over the Atlantic, was unusually mild and temperature rose to 55°F. or above at most places in England and Wales on the 15th. On the 17th and 18th a ridge of high pressure moved east across the country giving widespread frost, but during the 18th, mild south-westerlies returned and heavy rain fell in the north-west. Between the 20th and 22nd there was a major change of type. Whilst temperature reached 55–57°F. in many places in the south on the 20th, there was an anticyclone to the north-east of Iceland and colder air was encroaching over the north-east districts of the British Isles. During its advance there was heavy rainfall and some flooding in southern Scotland and northern England. By the 22nd the anticyclone had moved to Scandinavia, and on the 23rd its central pressure reached 1048 mb. and it was the dominant feature for the remainder of the month. Frost occurred over much of England on the 24th and from this time onward the weather was severe. A trough over Ireland and west Scotland gave heavy rain locally in these areas on the 24th; on the 25th the trough developed into a depression which moved south-east giving considerable snow over most western districts of Great Britain and in southern England excluding Kent and the London area. Further snow, mainly in small amounts, fell widely during the following days and the weather continued very cold with severe frost.

Pressure and Wind.—Mean pressure substantially exceeded the average for the period 1921–50, the deviation from the average at 9h. ranging from +9.9 mb. at Stornoway to +4.4 mb. at Tunbridge Wells. Winds were mainly northerly from the 3rd to the 10th, from between south-west and north-west from the 11th to the 20th and south-easterly becoming easterly and finally north-easterly from the 22nd onwards. The gale of the 15th was widespread and severe causing considerable damage and some loss of life. Wind also reached gale force locally at other times mainly on the 2nd–3rd, 13th, 14th, 16th, 17th, 19th and 22nd to 29th. Amongst the highest gusts registered, in knots, were 84 at Renfrew (a record high gust at that station), 82 at Millport, 77 at Kete and 76 at Bidston and Southport all on the 15th.

Temperature.—Mean temperature differed from the average for the period 1921–50 by –1.9°F. in England and Wales, –0.1°F. in Scotland and –0.3°F. in Northern Ireland. Conditions were very changeable, the first ten days being mainly cold, particularly from the 6th to the 8th, the next fortnight was mainly mild, notably so around the 15th and 20th, when temperature rose to 55°F. or above, and from the 23rd onward it was unusually cold. At Kew Observatory the maximum, 57.7°F. on the 15th was the highest in January

since records started in 1871. Temperature remained at 32°F. or below continuously at many places in England and Wales from the 26th to the 28th inclusive and at some places above 700 ft. from the 24th or 25th to the end of the month.

Extreme temperatures included:—(England and Wales) 59°F. at Rhyl and Prestatyn on the 14th, Boston, Dartford and Prestatyn on the 15th and Stratford-on-Avon on the 20th, 8°F. at Houghall on the 8th; (Scotland) 56°F. at Aberdeen on the 19th, 9°F. at Dalwhinnie on the 30th; (Northern Ireland) 55°F. at Armagh on the 19th, 17°F. at Ballykelly on the 31st.

Precipitation.—The general precipitation expressed as a percentage of the average for the period 1881–1915 was 88 over England and Wales, 101 over Scotland and 93 over Northern Ireland. In Scotland, south of a line from central Skye to Fifeshire the rainfall was above average almost everywhere; north of this line it was mainly less than average and in coastal districts of Aberdeenshire, Kincardineshire and Angus it was generally not much above 50 per cent. of average; Craibstone, with 47 per cent. of average, had its driest January since 1925. In England and Wales, it was less than average at most places south of a line from Scarborough to Ilfracombe, over much of south Wales and locally in north Wales and Cumberland; it was less than 50 per cent. of average over an area in the south Midlands and at Plymouth. Elsewhere in England and Wales rainfall was above average, notably near the mouth of the Tees, where Redcar had 184 per cent. of average. In Northern Ireland, rainfall ranged from less than 75 per cent. of average in the south to more than 110 per cent. at Londonderry.

Among heavy falls in 24 hours were:—

- 18th 3.35 in. at Ardgour, Argyllshire.
- 20th 3.66 in. at Dunsop Houses, Yorkshire, 3.62 in. at Fulwood Waterworks, Lancashire, 3.40 in. at Stonyhurst and at Ribchester Institute, Lancashire, 3.38 in. at Darwen and more than 2 in. at many other places in northern England.
- 24th 2.50 in. at Gruline, Island of Mull.
- 25th 2.24 in. at Lephinmore, Argyllshire.

Thunderstorms occurred in Scotland on the 5th, 12th–16th, 18th and 19th; they were widespread in Scotland on the 15th and occurred locally in Northern Ireland on the 15th and 16th. Rather widespread thunderstorms occurred in England on the 13th.

Snow or sleet occurred fairly frequently; it was widespread on the 6th and 7th and rather widespread around the 13th. Heavy snow fell in western districts of Great Britain and much of southern England on the 25th–26th and snow, mostly in small amounts, fell daily thereafter until the end of the month. At Clun, Shropshire, the average depth was 13 in. on the 26th–28th and 14 in. on the 29th–31st; at Evancoyd, Radnorshire, 12 in. fell on the night of the 25th–26th and the average depth was 12 in. from the 26th–28th. At Glenlyon, Perthshire, the average daily depth after the 26th was 11 in. At Bwlchgwyn, Denbighshire (1,267 ft.) snow lay 12 in. deep on the 26th and drifts were 6 ft. deep on the 28th.

Sunshine.—The general sunshine expressed as a percentage of the average for the period 1921–50 was 117 over England and Wales, 112 over Scotland and 78 over Northern Ireland. Compared with the average north and east Scotland, Northern Ireland, much of north-east England and parts of Wales were dull while west and south Scotland, southern England, most of the Midlands and parts of north-west England were sunny. At Fortrose it was the duller January since 1918 and at Lerwick the duller since 1922, while at Ruthwell, in Dumfriesshire, it was the sunniest January since 1910.

Miscellaneous Phenomena.—The aurora was observed in Scotland on 11 nights. Solar halos were noted at Oxford on five days.