

Monthly Weather Report

OF THE METEOROLOGICAL OFFICE

Summary of observations compiled from returns of official stations and voluntary observers.

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February 1969 — *Very cold with some heavy snowfall*

Low pressure to the east and south and high pressure to the west and north of the British Isles led to predominantly northerly or easterly winds which were mainly responsible for the exceptionally cold weather.

Weather — A cold and snowy month with blizzards in many places. Transport was often badly affected and outdoor sporting activities were severely curtailed. It was cold everywhere apart from a few mild days, mainly in the south, during the last week. In many places the resulting thaw led to flooding which was severe in the West Country.

Wind — Gales occurred less frequently than normal and were reported locally on 13 days in England and Wales, 11 days in Scotland and on 8 days in Northern Ireland. The first week was stormy in the north and east. A record gust of 118 kt was recorded at Kirkwall (Orkney) on the morning of the 7th in a north-westerly squall which was accompanied by a temperature of -4°C . This is the highest confirmed wind speed at a low-level station in the United Kingdom. On the 19th, there was a severe easterly gale in south-west England with frequent gusts of over 50 kt and one of 71 kt at Lizard. The combination of this gale with a high tide resulted in sea-water being blown over sea-walls and Teignmouth, in south Devon, was flooded in places. Along the south Devon coast, sea-defences were breached, property damaged and, in one place, beach shingle was carried hundreds of yards inland, covering roads and marooning vehicles.

Temperature — The month was cold everywhere; mean temperature in many places was more than 3 deg C below average. At Balmoral and at Colonsay (Argyll) the monthly mean temperature was 3.7 deg C below normal. It was the coldest February since 1963 in many areas. Frost, which was severe at times, occurred nightly during most of the month but it was less frequent and widespread in the last week. In many places, frost persisted all day on a number of occasions particularly around mid-month.

At Newton Rigg (171 m), Cumberland, a minimum temperature of -20°C occurred on the 16th; this is the lowest temperature recorded there this century. Other minima included: -20.6°C at Grantown-on-Spey (Moray) on the 18th; -18.9°C at Corwen (Merioneth) on the 16th; -13.3°C at Lisnafillan and Greenmount (both in Co. Antrim) on the 16th.

It was milder from the 21st to the 26th in many areas and much of the lying snow melted. Among the maxima for the month were the following: 13.9°C at Wisley on the 22nd; 11.7°C at Port Talbot, (Glamorgan) on the 23rd; 11.1°C at Balmacara House (Ross & Cromarty) on the 23rd; 10.2°C at Ballykelly (Londonderry) on the 23rd.

Rainfall — Rainfall (including melted snow) was less than half the monthly average over a large area of western Scotland and in parts of Cumberland and Westmorland. Most of Wales and southern England, north Scotland and places in Northern Ireland were drier than normal. On the other hand, more than twice the average rainfall occurred near Durham, around Wrexham and in the Yorkshire wolds.

Much of the precipitation during the month was in the form of snow. However, on the 10th, rain was heavy and widespread in Scotland, northern England and North Wales; 31 mm was recorded at Poulton-le-Fylde in Lancashire. A daily rainfall of 56 mm, all of which fell as snow, was measured on the 19th at Yeovilton (Somerset). On the 23rd, heavy rain fell in Northern Ireland and a daily fall of over 56 mm was recorded at Spelga Dam (Co. Down).

Thunder was heard on only one day in Scotland and Northern Ireland but on 13 days in the south. Thunderstorms, accompanied by hail, occurred in many places in England and Wales on the 6th. Hail was much more frequent than normal in south-west England and on the coasts of Wales.

Snow — The frequency of snow was very much greater than normal in all districts and it was often accompanied by strong winds. Heavy snow fell in many places during the first four days. On the 7th, snow in

south-west Scotland and Northern Ireland extended south and east to most of England and Wales. According to the Press, 20 cm of snow fell in 5 hours at places in Derbyshire and 10-15 cm were measured in many other areas, particularly in Wales. Blizzards struck widely-separated places from North Wales to Kent where over 30 cm were reported in the Deal area on the morning of the 8th. Roads were blocked, transport was disrupted and villages were isolated. Heavy snow showers in the west and north-west on the 9th and 10th resulted in falls of over 25 cm in Northern Ireland.

Another spell of widespread snow commenced in Scotland on the 13th and spread to Wales and northern England on the 14th where falls of over 15 cm were recorded locally; Manchester Airport was closed for about 7 hours. By the 15th, Whitby and villages in the North Riding of Yorkshire were isolated. On the same day, heavy falls occurred in Northern Ireland. More heavy snow fell in Wales and southern England on the 19th causing the closure of Gatwick Airport. Falls were generally 10-15 cm but 35 cm were reported at Tredegar, in Monmouthshire, and huge drifts built up on the moors in Devon and Cornwall. The next day, blizzards occurred further north and there was serious drifting in Wales, the West Country and the Midlands.

Sunshine — Sunshine amounts were mostly about average despite the last week being rather dull. Much of the sunshine occurred on a number of brilliantly sunny days in the first half of the month. However, eastern coasts of England and Scotland and also parts of the West Country had a rather dull month. In contrast, northwest Scotland was sunnier than normal. Noteworthy departures from normal (shown as percentage of average) included 144 per cent at Duntulm (Inverness-shire) and 60 per cent at Shrewsbury.

Fog — On the 17th, patches of freezing fog persisted all day in northern England and central Scotland. From the 22nd to the 25th a foggy spell accompanied the thaw in England and Wales. On the 23rd, fog was particularly widespread and very dense in the Midlands and northern England; in the Humber estuary, two ships collided in thick fog. Hill fog was extensive on the 25th in the Midlands and southern England.

Miscellaneous Phenomena — On the 19th, an avalanche occurred in the Cairngorms (Scotland) and a number of people were injured. The aurora was observed on 7 nights in Scotland and was seen from 9 places on the 11th/12th, the most southerly being Tiree, in the Hebrides.

TABLE I—DISTRICT VALUES, February 1969

DISTRICTS	AIR TEMPERATURE $^{\circ}\text{C}$					EARTH TEMP. $^{\circ}\text{C}$		RAIN DAYS	RAIN-FALL	SUNSHINE
	*Highest Max.	*Lowest Min.	Max.	Min.	Mean	Mean 30 cm.	Mean 122 cm			
	Difference from Average					% of Average				
0 SCOTLAND, N.	+ 8.9	- 8.9	-2.7	-2.8	-2.8	-0.8	+0.3	-2	90	111
1 SCOTLAND, E.	+ 9.4	-12.2	-3.2	-2.7	-2.9	-1.2	-0.2	+4	128	87
2 ENGLAND, N.E.	+ 8.9	-10.0	-3.5	-2.9	-3.2	-1.1	+0.1	+6	149	93
3 ENGLAND, E.	+11.7	-11.7	-3.4	-2.2	-2.9	-1.5	0.0	+3	132	104
4 MIDLANDS	+11.1	-10.6	-3.5	-2.5	-3.0	-1.0	+0.2	+3	117	106
5 ENGLAND, S.E.	+11.7	- 8.3	-2.3	-2.2	-2.2	-1.3	-0.2	0	89	102
6 SCOTLAND, W.	+ 9.3	-16.2	-2.7	-2.8	-2.7	-1.1	-0.2	-5	51	123
7 ENGLAND, N.W. and N.Wales	+11.6	-20.0	-3.1	-3.0	-3.1	-0.5	+0.2	+1	117	89
8 ENGLAND, S.W. and S.Wales	+11.7	-10.0	-2.6	-2.3	-2.4	-1.0	0.0	+2	93	97
N.IRELAND	+10.2	-12.9	-3.3	-2.9	-3.2	-	-	+1	104	94
SCOTLAND	+ 9.4	-16.2	-2.9	-2.8	-2.8	-	-	-1	77	107
ENG. and WALES	+11.7	-20.0	-3.1	-2.5	-2.8	-	-	+2	111	99

*Highest Max. and Lowest Min. of the District Value Stations.