

January 2010

The averaging period used for the following assessment was 1971-2000.

UK overview

The month was mostly unsettled, the first half being very cold with widespread snowfalls and some sharp frosts. After mid-month, temperatures rose to around normal before a return to colder conditions at month end. Overall, it was a very cold month with mean temperatures 2.5 to 3.0 °C below the 1971-2000 normal over England and Wales, and 2.0 to 2.5 °C below over most of Scotland and Northern Ireland. It was the coldest January over the UK since 1987 and equal eighth-coldest in a series from 1910.

Rainfall was well below normal over many western areas, especially west Scotland, north-west England, and Wales, and close to normal elsewhere.

Sunshine totals ranged from more than 50% above average in the west to somewhat below average along the east coast.

A maximum temperature of 13.2 °C was recorded on 16th at Kenton (Devon). A minimum temperature of -22.3 °C was recorded on 8th at Altnaharra (Highland), the lowest anywhere in the UK since 1995. In the 24 hours ending at 0900 on 22nd, 68.7 mm of rainfall was measured at Trassey Slievenaman (County Down). 62 cm of lying snow was reported from Strathdearn, Dalarossie (Inverness-shire) at 0900 on 6th. A wind gust of 76 mph was recorded on 16th at Sella Ness (Shetland).

England diary of highlights

The first half of the month was very cold and unsettled with some significant falls of snow and very sharp frosts. Around mid-month, temperatures rose to closer to average, with any snow mostly confined to higher ground and the east and north. The last week saw more settled conditions, before further cold weather and wintry showers at the end. Overall, it was a very cold month with mean temperatures typically 2.5 °C below the 1971-2000 normal but about 3.0 °C below in southernmost counties. It was the coldest January since 1987 and equal ninth-coldest in a series from 1910. Rainfall was generally close to, or somewhat below, normal but it was drier than normal in the north-west with less than 50% in Cumbria. Sunshine totals ranged from well above normal in western areas, with over 150% in Cornwall, to somewhat below normal along the east coast.

1st to 7th: The month began with fine weather but some wintry showers, especially in the east, and sharp frosts; early on 2nd the temperature at Shap (Cumbria) fell to -9.3 °C. On 5th, southward-moving weather fronts gave heavy falls of snow to many areas, particularly parts of east Yorkshire and the Manchester area, where 18 cm of snow accumulated. Then overnight 5th / 6th an area of low pressure brought heavy falls of snow to many southern counties. By the end of 6th there were depths of 20 to 30 cm in many central southern areas and as much as 50 cm in higher parts of the north-east. This was followed by an exceptionally cold night with minimum temperatures of -17.7 °C at Benson (Oxfordshire), -17.6 °C at Woodford (Greater Manchester) and -16.0 °C at Yeovilton (Somerset). The following nights were almost as cold.

8th to 14th: During the evening of 8th heavy snow spread to parts of Yorkshire. The 9th and 10th were bitterly cold, especially near the east coast in a strong north-easterly wind. From 12th to 14th, the very cold spell came to an end as rain and less cold air spread in from the south-west although most places experienced a further interval of snow. There was also some localised freezing rain, and fog became widespread at times.

15th to 24th: Temperatures rose closer to average, although there were still some sharp frosts and fog at times. Bands of rain spread in from the west and some of these were heavy enough to cause localised flooding problems; over 20 mm fell in some western and northern areas in the 24 hours to 0900 on 16th. In addition it was still cold enough for the rain to turn to snow at times, e.g. in some western and southern areas during 20th.

25th to 31th: The last week started with a ridge of high pressure bringing generally settled albeit rather cold conditions, with overnight frosts in many areas. However on 27th weather fronts moved southwards bringing rain. During 28th further fronts moved in from the west bringing another spell of rain, followed by a return to a cold north to north-westerly airflow from 29th to the end of the month. Many areas were dry with plenty of sunshine during these last few days, although snow showers affected some eastern and western areas and there were reports of 10 to 15 cm of fresh snow in parts of Northumberland on 30th.

Wales diary of highlights

The first thirteen days saw frequent snowfalls and some very low temperatures. Temperatures then rose to closer to normal, but it was still generally unsettled and there was a return to colder conditions at the end. Overall, it was a very cold month with mean temperatures between 2.5 and 3.0 °C below the 1971-2000 normal, making it the coldest January since 1987 and the ninth-coldest in a series from 1910. The number of days with air frost was the highest for January since 1987. Rainfall was generally between 60% and 70% of average. Sunshine totals were well above normal, especially across the south-west where some parts recorded over 150%.

1st to 13th: There were heavy snow showers in the south-west on 1st, then further sleet and snow showers in the west on 2nd, these spreading south-eastwards. The 3rd was mostly cold and sunny, after further snow showers in the south. There were snow showers again in the north-west later on 4th, before some very heavy snow spread to the north on 5th. The snow slowly eased during 6th, leaving accumulations of 30 cm in many central areas. This was followed by temperatures widely down to -10 °C on the morning of 7th. There were further snow showers in Pembrokeshire on 7th, otherwise it was a dry, very cold day. Early on 8th the temperature at Sennybridge (Powys) dipped to -14.7 °C, and 8th and 9th were both dry, cold and mostly sunny days. Daytime temperatures remained below zero. On 10th it became cloudy and there were some further significant accumulations of snow over the higher parts of central and north Wales, with a bitterly cold easterly wind. From 11th there was a gradual change to less-cold conditions, and it became cloudy with outbreaks of rain, sleet and snow spreading from the south-west. On 12th, further rain, sleet and snow spread slowly north-eastwards, and on 13th this became slow-moving in the north, gradually turning to rain and drizzle. Fog formed widely later in the day.

14th to 21st: There was widespread fog on 14th, freezing at first, clearing only slowly. Rain gradually moved eastwards on 15th, with a further band of rain early on 16th; 32.8 mm was recorded at Pembrey Sands (Carmarthenshire) in the 24 hours to 0900 on 16th. It was dry and bright on 17th, then cloudier with mist and fog on 18th. Cloudy with light rain on 19th, the rain becoming more persistent later in the day. On 20th, some heavier rain turned to sleet and snow over parts of the south-east, and later over other parts. On 21st it became mostly dry again, although still cloudy.

22nd to 31st: The 22nd and 23rd were mostly dry and bright with some sunshine, but then further rain, sleet and snow moved southwards during the evening of 24th, the sleet and snow mainly over the hills. The 25th was mostly cloudy and dull, and there was cloud again on 26th. Rain spread southwards on 27th with some heavier bursts in the west. The 28th was cloudy and mostly dry, but outbreaks of rain spread southwards by early on 29th. This was followed by a cold northerly flow on 30th and 31st with some sleet and snow showers, mostly in the north and west.

Scotland diary of highlights

The month saw mainly unsettled weather. The first half was very cold with frequent snowfalls and some sharp frosts. It then turned less cold until the last few days, when wintry showers returned to the north. Overall it was a cold month, with mean temperatures typically 2.0 to 2.5 °C below the 1971-2000 normal but closer to 1.5 °C below across the Western and Northern Isles. It was the coldest January since 1985 and the equal tenth-coldest in a series from 1910. The number of days with air frost was the highest for January since 1985. Rainfall was generally well below average, particularly across the west where less than 50% of normal was recorded. Sunshine totals varied from somewhat below normal in the north-east to well above normal across western Scotland, where it was the fourth-sunniest January in a series from 1929.

1st to 14th: The 1st was cold with sleet and snow showers, mainly in the north. A band of showers moved south during 2nd, falling as snow inland, with a sharp frost developing. The 3rd was mainly dry, sunny and very cold, with the temperature falling to -16.7 °C at Braemar (Aberdeenshire). Sleet and snow showers became more frequent and heavier in the north on 4th but it was mainly dry and bright further south. Snow showers continued across the north on 5th extending down to Fife, Lothians and Borders. Dry and bright elsewhere. Still mostly dry and cold on 6th, but snow showers affected the north and east, with heavy falls over parts of the Lothians and Borders. Further snow showers in the east on 7th, elsewhere dry and sunny. Snow showers in the north and east on 8th; elsewhere it was fine but very cold after overnight temperatures fell below -10 °C widely, with -22.3 °C at Altnaharra (Highland). A band of snow spread southwards early on 9th lifting temperatures somewhat. On 10th, it was generally dry but temperatures were low and the maximum at Fyvie Castle (Aberdeenshire) was -8.8 °C. The 11th was dry in the north but cloudier in the south. Coastal rain in the east on 12th with light snow on higher ground inland but western areas stayed mostly dry. Cold again on 13th, with patchy light rain in the east and snow on higher ground. Some sleet and snow gave fresh accumulations in the south on 14th.

15th to 22nd: The 15th was milder with some rain, with Lusa (Skye) reaching 11.1 °C. Cloudy with outbreaks of heavy rain and strong to gale force winds on 16th, turning drier and brighter from the west. Dry and bright for much of 17th, with a few showers in the west. Rain cleared overnight, leaving a mainly dry and bright day on 18th. A few coastal showers in the east on 19th but dry in the west. Showers across the north-east on 20th with rain and hill snow into the west later. A cloudy start on 21st before rain, with snow on the hills, spread in later. Wind and rain soon cleared all but Shetland on 22nd as widespread mist and fog developed later.

23rd to 31st: The 23rd and 24th were bright in the far west, while rain spread from the east turning to snow on high ground. The 25th was cold and cloudy in the south and east but sunny in the north-west. The 26th was mostly cloudy with occasional rain in the north. Rain cleared southwards on 27th with drier, brighter weather and a few showers following. It was mild, with 12.0 °C at Strathallan (Perth and Kinross), but it turned colder later. Rain affected most areas during 28th, turning to snow to lower levels in the north-east later. It became colder on 29th with wintry showers in the north and north-east. Snow showers affected the north on 30th and 31st, but it was dry elsewhere.

Northern Ireland diary of highlights

A mainly unsettled month. The first half was cold, with sleet and snow, before temperatures recovered to near normal. A return to colder weather in the last few days. Overall, it was a cold month with mean temperatures typically 2.0 to 2.5 °C below the 1971-2000 normal. It was the coldest January since 1985 and the eighth-coldest in a series from 1910. The number of air frosts was the highest for January since 1985. Rainfall was generally below average, particularly over western areas. Sunshine totals were generally above normal.

1st to 13th: Cold on 1st and 2nd with a scattering of wintry showers mainly in the north and east. The 3rd was mainly dry, bright and very cold with temperatures inland staying below freezing all day. A dry, bright start to 4th in the south, otherwise mainly cloudy with light wintry showers, becoming heavier in the north later. Some sunshine on 5th and 6th with scattered wintry showers, falling as snow inland. Mainly dry but cold with freezing fog continuing all day at Aldergrove (County Antrim) on 7th and for much of 8th. A cold bright day on 9th with a few snow showers in the north. The 10th saw snow showers in the south-east for a time then rain

later. Cloudy on 11th with rain or sleet and hill snow, dying out later. Mainly dry and rather cloudy on 12th. before patchy rain and sleet reached the south during the evening. A cold and cloudy day on 13th with patchy rain, sleet and snow.

14th to 22nd: Mostly dry and cloudy on 14th, though some sunny intervals developed. A breezy, mild day on the 15th, with temperatures reaching 10 °C in the west, before turning wet with gales. The rain cleared during the early hours of 16th to leave a day of sunny spells and scattered showers. The 17th was also mainly fine, but outbreaks of rain affected the north in the evening. The 18th and 19th were dry and mostly cloudy. Rain and strong winds spread eastwards through 20th. Local mist at first on 21st before turning windy as rain spread in later. Wind and rain soon cleared on 22nd as widespread mist and fog developed.

23rd to 31st: Mainly dry on 23rd with sunshine and patchy fog. Some rain affected the east on 24th. Early frost and fog cleared to sunshine on 25th. Mainly dry on 26th with a bright start, then it became cloudy with patchy drizzle in north. The 27th was a dull day with patchy drizzle but it was milder, with Castlederg (County Tyrone) reaching 10.5 °C. It turned colder on 28th with rain during the afternoon and evening. Showers on 29th turned wintry and there were also scattered wintry showers on 30th and 31st.

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