

MONTHLY WEATHER REPORT

COMPILED FROM RETURNS OF OFFICIAL AND VOLUNTARY OBSERVERS

DECEMBER 1982

VOLUME 99

NUMBER 12

Mostly unsettled and windy with wintry showers at times; mainly dry and milder later.

At the beginning of the month a ridge of high pressure covered the United Kingdom, but on the 4th and 5th a waving cold front came eastwards across all districts. Although an anticyclone progressed north-eastwards over the British Isles on the 6th a deep depression approached the west of Scotland during the following day, heralding a very disturbed two weeks with fronts affecting all parts at times. Between the 8th and 12th three eastward-moving depressions crossed the south of Britain while on the 15th and 20th two more passed to the north of Scotland and between Orkney and Shetland respectively. The last two were very intense, the second of which gave the lowest pressure in the United Kingdom since December 1886 with an estimated 936 mb on the north-west coast of the Isle of Lewis.

During the remainder of the month the track of Atlantic depressions moved to the vicinity of Iceland with associated fronts mostly affecting northern areas with high pressure to the south. Between the 28th and 30th a large anticyclone was centred over the nearby continent.

Weather

Periods of mainly dry weather during the first few days and the last week of the month were separated by a very disturbed spell. For about three weeks it was cold at times with wintry showers, particularly in the north, but the month ended mild generally. Thunderstorms were widespread over Wales and northern England on the 7th; otherwise they were isolated, occurring mainly in the west on the 8th, 10th and between the 15th and 21st.

Wind

Winds were fresh or strong at times with gales in exposed areas, especially in the north and south-west. The gales were occasionally severe. The 15th, 19th and 20th were particularly windy days with storm-force winds locally over coasts and hills, mainly in the north. On the 15th two motorists were killed by falling trees, one in Edinburgh, where the Royal Observatory, Blackford Hill recorded a gust of 81 kn, the other in Derby, while buildings, including the Playhouse, were severely damaged in Leeds; a gust of 78 kn and an hourly mean wind of 46 kn at Leeming in North Yorkshire were the highest there since records began in 1965. On the 19th six people died when two North Sea ferries collided off Harwich in Essex and several small boats were sunk at Christchurch in Dorset. However, it was quieter with lighter winds in most parts early and late in the month, and also in the north between the 9th and 13th. Until the 9th wind directions were mostly from between south-east and south-west. For the remainder of the month they were generally from a westerly point, being mainly north of west until the 23rd and south of west thereafter.

Temperature

Mean temperatures were within about 1 °C of but mainly below the monthly average. Over much of central southern and south-east England, however, and at some places in the Midlands, East Anglia and south-west England they were above normal.

Throughout the month temperatures were rather variable. Until the 23rd they were mostly below

average, especially in the north, with all districts being cold at times between the 12th and 23rd. Except in some coastal and urban areas frost was frequent and, in places, occasionally severe with minima of -15.1 °C at Grantown-on-Spey in Highland Region on the 17th and -10.0 °C at Loggerheads in Clwyd on the 23rd. However, central and southern districts were exceptionally mild on the 15th with the temperature reaching 16.3 °C at Prestatyn in Clwyd. Subsequently temperatures were generally above average with most areas being very mild between the 24th and 26th.

Rainfall

Monthly rainfall totals were above normal over much of the United Kingdom. More than 150 per cent of average was recorded at most places in Dumfries and Galloway Region and the south of Strathclyde Region, in scattered areas elsewhere in Scotland and here and there in the far west of both Northern Ireland and England, Wales and Jersey. Remaining areas, that is much of east England, parts of north-east England, East Anglia and the Midlands, and scattered areas in east and north Scotland, Northern Ireland, the far west and north of Wales, Cheshire and Kent had less rainfall than usual with totals down to about 75 per cent of average.

After a few days of generally dry weather early in the month all parts had periods of rain and, especially in the north, wintry showers at times until the last week, which was mainly dry again, except in the north-west. Rainfall was occasionally heavy, particularly over western districts on the 7th and also during the night of the 18/19th when considerable flooding resulted, especially in south-western Scotland and the Lake District; 24-hour totals for the 18th included 112.8 mm at Pen-y-Pass in Snowdonia and 89.5 mm at Coniston in Cumbria. Heavy rainfall on the 8th, 9th and 19th over parts of southern Britain also caused flooding in places.

Snow

Sleet or snow, falling mostly as showers, occurred daily in Scotland, except during the first and last three days and over the remainder of the United Kingdom between the 7th and 23rd, particularly in the north

and west. Snow lay frequently in the north, especially over the higher ground, with 21 days at Braemar in Grampian Region, but most low-lying areas in the south had none. The snowfall was heavy in places around the 17th, with 20 cm lying at Eskdalemuir in Dumfries and Galloway Region, and about the 22nd, with 16 cm at Keele in Staffordshire and 25 cm at Parkmore Forest in Co. Antrim.

Sunshine

Monthly sunshine totals were very variable. Most places in the eastern districts of England, much of Northern Ireland, parts of Scotland and a few places in the Midlands, central southern England and Greater Manchester had above-normal totals with about 150 per cent of average in Central London and on the coast of North Yorkshire. Elsewhere sunshine was below normal. Less than 50 per cent of average was recorded in Shetland, where in Lerwick it was the dullest December since records began in 1921 with only 4.0 hours of sunshine of which 3.1 hours occurred between the 11th and 13th. Despite the wetness of the period most other areas had several quite sunny days between the 6th and 22nd.

Fog

Overnight fog, dense in places, formed at times, mainly during the first two weeks of the month. It persisted all day in parts of eastern England on the 3rd, and in some central areas on the 6th when many vehicles were involved in motorway accidents at Worsley (Greater Manchester). Hill fog was most frequent over south-western districts where coastal fog patches were also reported between the 23rd and 26th.

Miscellaneous Phenomena

Local tornadoes were reported at the passage of cold fronts on the 7th in the Midlands and on the 9th in southern England. On the first occasion considerable damage was caused to farm buildings at Shobdon in Hereford and Worcester while on the second an express was partly derailed by a fallen tree near Fleet in Hampshire. Otherwise damage was fairly slight and the only injuries were to six runners who were slightly hurt at Wolverhampton.

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	11.3	-6.5	-0.5	-0.8	-0.7	-1.1	+2	137	77
1 Scotland E	12.5	-13.7	-0.5	-1.0	-0.7	-0.8	-1	122	87
2 England E & NE	15.2	-7.0	0.0	-0.8	-0.4	-0.6	-2	112	117
3 East Anglia	14.5	-5.5	+0.3	-0.6	-0.2	+0.1	-5	100	116
4 Midland Counties	14.8	-9.8	+0.2	-0.5	-0.2	-0.3	-3	102	89
5 England SE & Central S	14.0	-5.2	+0.4	0.0	+0.2	+0.2	-2	121	116
6 Scotland W	11.4	-7.8	-0.4	-0.9	-0.6	-0.5	+1	141	94
7 England NW & Wales N	14.0	-9.7	-0.2	-0.4	-0.3	-0.8	+1	134	77
8 England SW & Wales S	14.0	-4.3	0.0	-0.4	-0.2	-0.5	+2	124	77
N Ireland	12.9	-5.0	-0.3	-0.9	-0.6	-0.5	+2	122	104
Scotland	12.5	-13.7	-0.5	-0.9	-0.7	-0.8	+1	133	86
England & Wales	15.2	-9.8	+0.1	-0.5	-0.2	-0.3	-1	115	99

* Highest maximum and lowest minimum of District Value Stations