

MONTHLY WEATHER REPORT

FEBRUARY 1973

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Alternating mild and cold spells.

A series of depressions and troughs of low pressure from the Atlantic affected the British Isles during the month. They were active mainly in the north and west but a few produced significant precipitation in other areas especially during the latter half of the month.

Weather

It was alternately mild and cold with showers or outbreaks of rain which were more widespread and frequent in the west than in the east. Showers were of snow or sleet (snow with rain or drizzle) at times and hail and thunder were reported occasionally. Around mid-month and during the last week snowfall was heavy and prolonged in many areas with some drifting especially in the north and north-west. Fog occurred infrequently but was dense and persistent in some areas, and occasionally there were patches of freezing fog.

Wind

Winds were often fresh or strong, especially in the west and north, but the number of days on which gales were reported was generally a little below average. On the 6th and 7th Scotland and north England had severe gales with gusts which exceeded 60kt in many places. On the evening of the 6th a mean wind speed of 70 kt and gust of 100 kt were recorded at Saxa Vord (Shetland) (285 m approx). North-westerly gales in many areas on the 12th caused minor damage to buildings and trees and it was reported that a furniture lorry was blown over near Tadcaster (Yorkshire). Winds reached storm force (mean speeds 48 to 55 kt) in west Scotland and north-west England on the night of the 12th/13th and a gust of 70 kt was recorded at Tiree (Argyll). Gales continued on the 13th in the west and north and were again reported from the same areas from the 20th to the 23rd and on the 28th.

Temperature

In England and Wales mean temperatures were near or a little above average except in a few areas in the south. South-east Scotland and parts of west Scotland were also a little milder than average. Elsewhere it was a little colder than average. Mild and cold spells followed one another throughout the month, the cold periods being more prolonged in Scotland and Northern Ireland than in England and Wales. Frost was more frequent in Scotland than elsewhere; but, around mid-month and during the last week, it occurred widely and was severe or very severe at times in Scotland and north-east England. On the 15th the temperature at Carnwath (Lanarkshire) fell to -21.2°C , the lowest February temperature there since records began in 1953. On the 20th, during a short mild spell, it was particularly warm in eastern areas of

Great Britain and a maximum temperature of 16.6°C was measured at Aberdeen, the highest temperature recorded there in February since 1950.

Rainfall (including melted snow)

Rainfall was less than half the average in the south-east of Northern Ireland, south-east Scotland, north-east England, in parts of the Midlands and in central southern England. Some stations in these areas were very dry, reporting less than 25% of average: Montrose (Angus) had a total for the month of only 1.5 mm, its driest February since 1895. In most other districts rainfall ranged from 50% to 150% of average but small areas of the Outer Hebrides had over twice the average. Periods of rain or showers were more frequent in western districts than elsewhere but hail and thunder were reported at times from widely scattered areas. Snow or sleet fell mainly on high ground in the north but for a few days around mid-month and during the last week snowfall was heavier and more widespread. A number of stations in the west and north had notable rainfall on one or two days during the first two weeks: in the 24 hours beginning 09 GMT on the 5th 66.4 mm of rain fell at Glenfinnan (Inverness-shire) and on the 11th Honister Pass (Cumberland) and Clywedog Dam (Montgomeryshire) reported 'daily' falls of 58.0 mm and 56.5 mm respectively.

Snow

Showers of snow or sleet occurred throughout the month mostly over high ground in the west and north: however, around mid-month and for most of the last week snow was more widespread. Heavy snow fell over large areas of Northern Ireland, Scotland, and north England during the night of the 12th/13th with local drifting which blocked a number of mountain roads for a time. Surface and air traffic were further disrupted on the 14th and 15th and again between the 23rd and 25th

following prolonged snowfall in many areas. Between the 12th and the 15th up to 23 cm of undrifted snow accumulated in parts of Northern Ireland and some places had their heaviest February snowfall since 1947. At Fersit (Inverness-shire) (259 m) an undrifted depth of 41 cm of snow was measured on the 14th and later in the month a number of Scottish stations reported depths of 20 cm or more. The snow did not lie for very long except on the higher slopes of the mountains.

Sunshine

Except for a few western and northern districts which were rather dull, sunshine was generally near or above average. In east Scotland and north-east England some places had over 150% of average and at Stonehaven (Kincardineshire) it was the sunniest February on record since 1909. Sunny days were most frequent in eastern and southern districts. Among the many sunny places in south-east England on the 17th and 18th Brighton (Sussex) recorded 18.5 hours of bright sunshine out of a maximum possible 18.6 hours for the two days.

Fog

Fog occurred widely in the east and south of England and the Midlands during the first week, and dense and persistent patches interfered with surface and air transport at times. Hill and coast fog patches were also reported from western districts. On several days during the third week fog, persistent and freezing at times, affected central Scotland, parts of Northern Ireland and some areas of England. It was foggy again in many areas of England from the 25th to the 27th.

Miscellaneous Phenomena

The aurora was observed in Scotland on 14 nights.

Table 1 District values

February 1973

District	air temperature $^{\circ}\text{C}$					mean 30-cm earth temp $^{\circ}\text{C}$	rain-days	rainfall	sun-shine
	Highest	Lowest	max.	min.	mean				
	Max. †	Min. †	difference from average						
0 Scotland N	12.6	-9.6	0.0	-0.6	-0.3	-	+1	131	103
1 Scotland E	16.3	-9.4	+0.9	-0.2	+0.4	+0.9	-5	45	136
2 England N E	14.0	-8.9	+1.2	-0.2	+0.6	+0.8	-6	41	151
3 England E	12.5	-5.0	+0.6	+0.1	+0.4	+0.9	-2	54	113
4 Midland Counties	12.8	-9.0	+0.9	+0.4	+0.7	+1.0	-2	62	133
5 England S E	12.1	-7.7	+0.6	0.0	+0.3	+0.3	-5	47	109
6 Scotland W	12.4	-14.9	+0.3	0.0	+0.1	+1.1	+2	99	115
7 Eng N W & Wales N	12.0	-12.6	+0.8	+1.0	+0.8	+1.4	+2	79	109
8 Eng S W & Wales S	14.0	-11.0	+0.5	+0.4	+0.4	+1.0	0	73	99
N Ireland	13.5	-10.9	-0.2	+0.1	0.0	-	+2	99	99
Scotland	16.3	-14.9	+0.4	-0.3	+0.1	-	-1	92	118
England & Wales	14.0	-12.6	+0.8	+0.3	+0.5	-	-3	59	119

† Highest max. and lowest min. of the District Value Stations