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

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February 1954—Generally cold, notably so in first week; mainly dull; rather frequent snow.

The very cold north-easterly winds experienced at the end of January persisted over England and Wales during the first few days of February and were followed by a ridge of high pressure moving slowly south. From the 6th to 7th onwards changeable, predominantly cyclonic conditions, prevailed.

An anticyclone situated over southern Scandinavia on the 1st merged on the 2nd with another westward of Ireland and subsequently the whole belt of high pressure moved slowly south. Very cold weather prevailed and locally in the south temperature remained at 32°F. or below continuously from the evening of January 29 to the morning of February 7; some notably low screen minimum temperatures were registered during this spell. The snowfall of late January still lay on the ground and, in the south, the fresh north-easterly winds caused deep drifts in places; roads were blocked and villages isolated, particularly in Kent. Rivers, canals and lakes were frozen or partly frozen. On the 6th–7th a deep depression was centred north of Scotland and an occlusion crossed the British Isles giving rain in the south and extreme west but snow in many northern districts and in Lincolnshire. Further depressions brought more snow to northern and eastern areas on the 8th–10th and smaller falls in south-eastern and Midland areas. Keen frost occurred in northern districts on the 8th and 9th. On the 10th a depression off the west of Ireland moved south-east giving precipitation in most places; there was a temporary rise in temperature over much of England, Wales and Ireland, 50°F. being reached at a number of places in the south and west but fog kept temperature below 40°F. locally, for example at West Raynham, Norfolk and at Watnall, near Nottingham. Further depressions moved south-east over our south-west districts during the next few days and rather cold easterly winds prevailed over much of the country with some precipitation; a good deal of fog occurred in eastern districts. On the 15th and 16th a ridge of high pressure moved south-east over the British Isles, and there was more fog in eastern and Midland districts. From the 17th to the 19th small wave depressions moved east-north-east over southern England giving widespread rain. Then a changeable, rather mild, south-westerly type of weather prevailed for a few days, with temperature reaching or exceeding 50°F. locally; rainfall was fairly heavy at times in some northern districts. Between the 25th and 27th a complex depression moved from south of Iceland to the North Sea. Strong winds and gales occurred in England, Wales and Ireland on the 26th and the colder air coming round the rear of the depression brought showery weather, with snow and sleet in many places, particularly in the northerly current on the 28th.

Pressure and Wind.—Mean pressure was everywhere below the average for the period 1921–50, the deviation from the average at 9h. ranging from –1.6 mb. at Lerwick to –6.6 mb. at Southampton. Winds from between north and east were frequent in England and Wales, and the total run of the wind was below the average, notably so in north-west England; at Southport, for example, it was the least windy February since 1932. Winds reached gale force at times mainly on the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 6th, 7th, 12th–13th, 19th–22nd and 25th–28th. The gale on the 6th was severe in the north of Scotland and the one on the 26th was widespread in England, Wales and Ireland. Among the highest gusts, registered in knots, were 68 at Stornoway on the 6th and 68 at Southport and Bidston and 66 at Speke on the 26th.

Temperature.—Mean temperature differed from the average for the period 1921–50 by –3.1°F. in England and Wales, –2.7°F. in Scotland and –2.1°F. in Northern Ireland. The first week was intensely cold in England and Wales; at some places in the south

temperatures remained at 32°F. or below continuously from the evening of January 29 to the morning of February 7. Notably low screen minimum temperatures included –4°F. at Welshpool, 0°F. at Hawarden Bridge, 1°F. at Hawarden and 3°F. at Moorhouse on the 2nd, 3°F. at Moorhouse on the 6th, 0°F. at Braemar and 4°F. at Dalwhinnie on the 9th. The 10th was a mild day in the south and west and a rather mild spell occurred from about the 21st to 24th or 25th.

Extreme temperatures included:—(England and Wales) 58°F. at Prestatyn on the 21st and at Newport, Shropshire and Raunds on the 22nd, –4°F. at Welshpool on the 2nd; (Scotland) 56°F. at Fort Augustus on the 21st, 0°F. at Braemar on the 9th; (Northern Ireland) 56°F. at Armagh on the 21st, 18°F. at Garvagh on the 1st and Aldergrove on the 3rd.

Precipitation.—The general precipitation expressed as a percentage of the average for the period 1881–1915 was 131 over England and Wales, 98 over Scotland and 149 over Northern Ireland. In Scotland, it was less than average over a large area in the north and north-west extending southward over much of Argyll as well as locally south of the Firth of Forth; elsewhere it was above average, considerably so in the Shetland Islands, north-east Aberdeenshire and in the neighbourhood of the Firth of Tay. In England and Wales, it was less than average in the central area of the extreme north of England; it was generally above average elsewhere and was 175 per cent of average locally on the coasts of Pembrokeshire, north Devon and south Cornwall. In Northern Ireland there was a general excess, the percentage of the average ranging from 121 at Londonderry to 166 at Armagh. Among the larger falls in 24 hours was 2.06 in. at Patterdale, Westmorland on the 24th.

Thunderstorms occurred on the 7th, 8th, 10th, 22nd–25th, 27th and 28th; they were mostly very local but were rather widespread in England and Wales on the 25th.

Snow, which fell at the end of January, lay on the ground during the cold spell at the beginning of February and mainly slight snow fell at times during this period. The strong north-easterly winds in southern England caused local drifting and some villages were isolated, notably in Kent (there were drifts up to 7 ft. at Throwley, near Faversham on the 1st and at Biddenden drifts up to 3 ft. on the 3rd lasted for several days). Considerable snow fell in the north and east from the 7th to the 10th; snow fell again during the last few days; it was widespread and rather heavy locally on the 28th. There were drifts up to 6 ft. at Cowpe (Lancashire) on the 6th and 5 ft. at Moorhouse (Westmorland) and 6 ft. at Alston on the 10th.

Sunshine.—The general sunshine expressed as a percentage of the average for the period 1921–50 was 88 over England and Wales, 84 over Scotland and 65 over Northern Ireland. The month was mostly dull except in south-west England and south Wales where it was very sunny for the time of year. It was also sunnier than usual in the neighbourhood of the Moray Firth, at Oban and locally in the south Midlands, Wiltshire and north Wales. At Eskdalemuir it was the duller February since 1936.

Fog.—Fog occurred frequently in eastern and Midland districts of England and in the neighbourhood of large towns, particularly from the 8th to the 22nd; it was observed at 9 h. on 21 days at Whitworth Park, Manchester and 16 days at Huddersfield, Pontefract, Wakefield and Wallasey. Fog was rather persistent in the Renfrew area from the 1st. to the 5th.

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