

January 2013

The averaging period used for the following assessment was 1981-2010.

UK overview

The month was one of some contrasts. It began very mild with little rain for England and Wales and temperatures significantly above average for the time of year. By mid-month it had turned significantly colder across most of the country. A succession of weather systems meeting this cold air led to a period of significant snowfall across much of the country causing considerable disruption between 18th and 25th. A change to milder, wetter, windy conditions in the last few days of the month led to a rapid thaw and some localised flooding.

The UK mean temperature was 3.3 °C which is 0.3 °C below the 1981-2010 average. Scotland was marginally warmer than average, but England and Wales were colder. January was slightly drier than average in most areas, with the exception of Northern Ireland and a few localised areas in England and Wales. The UK overall had 91% of the average January rainfall. It was also a rather dull month with 77% of the long term average. Northern Ireland, southern and eastern Scotland, north west England and north Wales were particularly dull.

A maximum temperature of 14.5 °C was recorded at Colwyn Bay and Betws-y-Coed (Conwy) on the 2nd and again at Hawarden (Flintshire), Cambridge Botanic Garden and Westonzoyland (Somerset) on the 29th. A minimum temperature of -13.6 °C was recorded at Buntingford (Hertfordshire) early on the 22nd. In the 24 hours ending at 0900 on the 27th, 91.0 mm of rain fell at Black Laggan (Dumfries and Galloway). A wind gust of 86 m.p.h. was recorded at Fair Isle during the 30th. At 0900 GMT on the 23rd, a snow-depth of 40 cm was measured at Balmoral (Aberdeenshire).

Weather impacts

Significant snowfalls occurred during Friday 18th January as frontal systems attempted to push across the UK from the west. The heaviest snowfalls occurred across parts of south Wales, with around 25cm in some locations, but much of south-west, southern, central and northern England, and north Wales were affected. Further snowfalls affected parts of south-east and eastern England, including the London area, over the weekend of 19th/20th January. By 21st January the heaviest falls were across north-east England and eastern Scotland. The snowfalls caused significant disruption across the UK. Roads and railways were affected, including hundreds of motorists who became trapped on the M6 motorway on 25th. There were flight delays and cancellations at many airports, including Heathrow, and thousands of schools were closed.

A rapid thaw and heavy rain then shifted concerns to flooding across many parts of the country, which caused further disruptions to the transport network.

The end of the month also brought some strong or severe gales, causing some travel disruption particularly in north Scotland. The end of house in Leverburgh (Harris) collapsed onto a neighbouring property in the high winds.

England diary of highlights

The month began with a generally mild and settled spell, with only modest rainfall amounts and some fog, but it turned much colder for a fortnight from 12th onwards with several significant snowfalls. Toward the end of the month, milder and changeable conditions brought rain and strong winds.

The mean temperature was 0.7 °C below the 1981-2010 average. It was wetter than normal in some southern and eastern fringes, but slightly drier than normal for most other areas, with England overall receiving 96% of the long-term average. Sunshine was somewhat below normal in most areas with 81% of average; parts of the south-east and the north-west were particularly dull.

1st to 11th:

Generally dry and bright on 1st, with the best of the sunshine in the south. The 2nd saw rain for eastern areas in the morning, which cleared to leave scattered showers in the north-west. It was mainly dry but dull for many areas on 3rd, although the north-east saw some patchy rain, and mild with temperatures reaching 12 °C in many areas. From 4th to 6th it remained dry and mild, but mostly overcast. A band of rain spread across the northern half of the country on 7th, with St Bees Head (Cumbria) recording 33 mm, while southern areas remained settled. The north-west again had rain for much of 8th, with the remainder of the country again generally dry after some early fog patches. After rain in the south-east and mist and fog in central areas had cleared early on 9th, it was a fine day. On 10th, after more widespread mist and fog cleared, a band of rain spread from the south-west, reaching central areas by afternoon. The Midlands and some southern areas again started foggy on 11th, and there were some light showers for eastern coastal areas.

12th to 25th:

A band of rain, with snow for some higher inland areas, spread from the west on 12th and tracked along southern counties to reach the south-east during the afternoon. On 13th a band of rain, again with snow over higher ground, spread into the north-west in late morning and reached the south-east by nightfall. Another band of at times heavy rain, sleet and snow spread from the west during the morning of 14th and cleared the far south-east in the evening, with Marham (Norfolk) recording 9 cm of snow. Eastern coastal areas had snow showers on 15th, and away from the far south-west temperatures were below average. After a frosty night on which Marham (Norfolk) recorded -13.1 °C, 16th was a quieter day, remaining cold with many areas away from the far south-west remaining below freezing all day. The 17th started wet in the south-west, the patchy rain turning readily to snow as it moved north and east. On 18th a band of sleet and snow spread from the west during the day, many southern and central areas having significant depths; Filton (Bristol) recorded 16 cm. The snow moved to eastern areas on 19th, with Loftus (Cleveland) recording 16 cm, although it remained cold with only patchy light snow for other areas. A band of snow moved into the south-east during the morning of 20th and then up the eastern side of England in the afternoon, Andrewsfield (Essex) and Wittering (Cambridgeshire) recording depths of 16 cm. The 21st saw a widespread frost and a cold but bright day, with northern and north-eastern areas getting some snow. After another cold start on 22nd, when Buntingford (Hertfordshire) fell to -13.6 °C, snow in the north-east gradually died out, by which time Redesdale (Northumberland) had a depth of 28cm. Later that day another band of rain and snow spread to the south and south-west, which lasted for much of 23rd over southern areas and the Midlands. The 24th was drier and brighter, but remained cold after a frosty start. On 25th an area of rain for coastal areas, but snow for many other areas, spread from the west during the afternoon, and parts of the north-west received 10 cm of fresh snow.

26th to 31st:

Milder weather returned on 26th, with south-westerly winds increasing and rain spreading from the west. Scattered showers for western and central areas on 27th were driven on by strong westerly winds. More rain spread from the west on 28th with strong westerly winds. The 29th was again breezy, but mild - up to 14 °C in some areas - with rain in the north-west. Cooler on 30th as the winds turned north-westerly, with showers for northern areas. The 31st was brighter, but still breezy with scattered showers in the north.

Wales diary of highlights

The month began with a spell of mild weather, with little rain, though it remained mostly cloudy. By 11th it had turned significantly colder, with some wintry precipitation at times between 14th and 23rd. The month

approached its end with a mild but wet and windy theme.

The mean temperature was 0.4 °C below the 1981-2010 average. It was slightly drier than normal for most areas away from the southern fringe, with 89% of the long-term average for Wales overall. The month was relatively dull with 76% of the normal sunshine hours, especially towards the north.

1st to 8th:

It was mild on 1st, sunny on the coasts but with more cloud inland. It remained mainly dry and mild until 6th, but dull, with 13.4 °C recorded at Rhyl (Denbighshire) on 2nd. Some patchy rain skirted across the north coast on 7th, and a further area of light to moderate rain passed from west to east through the day.

9th to 13th:

Dry and mainly sunny on 9th, with temperatures slightly lower than on previous days and a colder night to follow. Light rain spread in from the south-west through the afternoon of 10th. Some sunshine and showery rain on 11th, feeling colder with a night frost. It was mainly cloudy with some light showery rain again on 12th, mainly in the east and south-east. Light rain moved in from the north-west on 13th, moving south-east through the afternoon but leaving the south-west drier with some sunshine.

14th to 24th:

A band of rain, with sleet and snow on hills, crossed from west to east on the morning of 14th, and showers followed which were wintry on higher ground away from coasts, with a north-westerly wind. Apart from occasional showers in the west, 15th was fine, with some sunshine and light winds. It remained cold and dull on 16th (and for several days following), with temperatures barely rising above freezing away from coasts, and light rain edged in from the west through the afternoon and evening. Rain, falling as sleet or snow on the hills, crossed from west to east during 17th, with winds strengthening later. On 18th a band of snow, then wintry showers, moved north-eastwards, with 26 cm recorded at Sennybridge (Powys). The 19th was dry apart from an isolated morning shower. On 20th temperatures barely got above freezing, with some sleet and snow in the north and east, and 21st saw some showers, wintry over hills, especially in the south-west. The 22nd again brought showers to the west, and an area of more organised sleet and snow in the south-east. Some snow fell in the south-west in the afternoon of 23rd. On 24th it was still cold, but finally the sun returned and winds fell light.

25th to 31st:

Dull with rain and increasing winds on 25th, although becoming milder. The 26th started bright but soon clouded over from the west with rain moving in. The milder air saw 12.8 °C recorded at Prestatyn (Denbighshire). It was brighter but cooler on 27th, with strong winds and some afternoon showers. A band of rain with strong winds crossed from west to east on 28th, clearing by dusk. The 29th again saw rain and strong winds spread from the west. Cooler on 30th but drier and brighter with a few showers in the north, and 31st was generally dry and bright.

Scotland diary of highlights

The first ten days were mild, and rather unsettled with rain at times, after which it became colder with several instances of significant snowfall, particularly across higher ground. The last few days of the month were milder again, with rain at times, and some very strong winds.

The mean temperature was 0.2 °C above the 1981-2010 average. It was drier than average in most places with a few isolated exceptions in some coastal areas in both the south-west and south-east, but for Scotland overall only 84% of the long term average. The month was relatively dull with 71% of average sunshine.

1st to 10th:

The 1st saw scattered showers in the north and west, with other areas generally dry and bright. A band of rain spread from the west in the early hours of 2nd, driven through by a strong westerly wind, clearing to leave a few showers for northern areas. Some rain in western areas on 3rd, otherwise mild and dry with temperatures reaching 13 °C in Aberdeen. The 4th was mild and dry too, with 13 °C again in Aberdeenshire. It was another mild but cloudy day on 5th although rain spread into western areas later. There was rain on 6th for western and northern areas but the east stayed mainly dry. Widespread rain fell on 7th, with the heaviest bursts in the south-west where Dundrennan and Threave (both Dumfries & Galloway) recorded around 40 mm. Residual rain cleared central and eastern areas in the morning on 8th to leave a brighter afternoon. It was another dull but dry day on 9th, with some mist and fog for central areas. The 10th started with fog in central and southern areas, and eastern coastal areas were plagued by low cloud and drizzle for much of the day.

11th to 25th:

There was fog in the Borders area to start the day on 11th, and showers for northern areas which fell as snow over the high ground as northerly winds began to bring in colder air. The 12th began showery in the south-west and was wet for most of the day in the north-east, this rain turning to sleet or snow on higher ground. Rain and snow spread from the west to all parts on 13th. Another band of rain, sleet and snow swept in from the west overnight into 14th, clearing to the east by midday; it turned colder with showers in the north and west. Sleet or snow in the east on 15th, but becoming dry everywhere later. Very cold on 16th, with a minimum of -13.1 °C at Braemar (Aberdeenshire); early rain in the west turned to snow as it edged further east. Mostly dry on 17th, but some showers in the Outer Hebrides and rain in the far south-west later in the day. Winds increased on 18th, especially in the north, and snow showers in the east became more frequent with blizzard conditions on higher ground. There were more snow showers in the east on 19th, blown in on the strong easterly wind, with blizzard conditions in the Grampians. Dry and cloudy on 20th with the exception of some light snow showers in the east. Overnight into 21st there were snow showers in eastern and central parts, then rain, sleet and snow spread from the south to most areas during the day; feeling very cold in a strong easterly wind. Rain, sleet and snow again on 22nd, with Aboyne (Aberdeenshire) recording 28 cm, the snow slowly eased and cleared from the south. Dry for most on 23rd, but with showers of rain, sleet and snow in the east. It was dry but cloudy for most parts on 24th, with a few showers in the north-east and Northern Isles. Wet and breezy almost everywhere on 25th, with rain spreading east to all areas quickly turning to snow, heavy at times, before clearing away eastwards overnight. Eskdalemuir (Dumfriesshire) recorded a depth of 30 cm.

26th to 31st:

It was dry in most areas on 26th, but rain in the west later on spread eastwards overnight. A thaw of lying snow commenced as it became milder. Blustery showers and longer spells of rain on 27th with only the north-east staying dry, and again showers or longer spells of rain, heavy at times, for most areas on 28th, with 36 mm recorded at Cluanie Inn (Highland) and 38 mm at Tyndrum (Perthshire). It felt cold in the fresh to strong southerly wind. The 29th began mostly dry but rain and showers spread to all areas from the west, winds increasing substantially as the day progressed. Most areas had showers or longer periods of rain on 30th, with winds reaching gale force at times. The 31st was very windy too, and rain and showers spread northwards.

Northern Ireland diary of highlights

The first week of January was rather unsettled and very mild, after which the weather became more settled but colder. Mid-month it remained cold but was rather less settled, bringing some snowfalls, before a strong westerly airflow brought a milder and wetter end to the month.

The mean temperature was 0.2 °C above the 1981-2010 average. It was slightly wetter than normal (121%) particularly towards the east of the Province. It was a notably dull month, with only 60% of the long-term average sunshine.

1st to 7th:

Scattered showers during the morning of 1st cleared away in the afternoon. The 2nd started with showers in northern areas but these cleared to leave a bright afternoon with temperatures reaching 13°C at Derrylin, County Fermanagh. Pressure built on 3rd and 4th but it remained cloudy with a mild southerly breeze and temperatures in some areas reaching 12 °C. Becoming unsettled but remaining mild with rain spreading quickly from the west in the afternoon of 5th, before turning brighter. The 6th was dull with rain persisting for much of the day, and periods of rain continued through 7th.

8th to 24th:

A brighter, mainly dry day on 8th, but much colder as high pressure began to dominate on 9th giving rise to overnight frosts and generally dull conditions. A widespread frost with fog in places on 10th, with a minimum temperature of -5.7 °C recorded at Katesbridge, County Down. Rain spread from the west in the afternoon, clearing quickly to give another frosty night. Isolated showers in the afternoon of 11th, then mainly dry on 12th, with showers in the east later. Frost early on 13th before rain arrived in the afternoon, heavy in places and wintry on high ground. Another frosty start before rain spread from the north-west on 14th, clearing to showers. The 15th was bright with showers confined to the east, and a south-easterly wind set in. Rain spread from the west in the evening but cleared quickly allowing another frosty night. There was rain in most areas by midday on 16th and further rain on 17th, becoming drier from the west in the afternoon with another overnight frost. Rain spread in during the morning of 18th, as south-easterly winds strengthened, turning to snow on high ground at first and to lower levels as it pushed eastwards, leaving a covering of snow in most places. Drier with frost developing overnight on 19th, with snow showers continuing for a time in the east. Frost overnight again, then largely dry but cloudy on 20th. Further rain, turning to snow as it spread from the south-west and persisting for much of 21st, led to further accumulations in many areas, a snow depth of 24 cm being recorded at Lough Fea, County Londonderry. After a frosty start, 22nd was cloudy and misty with a few scattered showers of sleet and snow in the east. Mainly dry and cloudy again on 23rd with a few snow flurries in the east during the early hours and an overnight frost. The 24th was generally fine and dry as high pressure regained control for a time.

25th to 31st:

Cloud spread from the west on 25th, south-easterly winds strengthened and rain persisted for much of the day, heavy at times, but it was milder with temperatures up to around 8 °C. Overnight on 26th was dry with a touch of frost in some places, and fine and dry before rain arrived in the afternoon. Becoming dry overnight on 27th but blustery showers affected most areas as the west or south-westerly winds strengthened. The 28th started dry but showers developed for most, heavy in places. Early rain, then dry apart from showers in the east in the afternoon of 29th, with temperatures reaching 14 °C in Belfast. Blustery showers in the strong south-westerly wind on 30th. Rain cleared in the morning on 31st, followed by showers, and westerly winds remained strong to gale force, up to 70 m.p.h. in places.

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