

January 2003

The averaging period used for the following assessment was 1961-1990.

UK overview

Temperatures were generally a little above average. It was very sunny across the south and the west. The north and east experienced above average rainfall and some significant snowfall in the second week and towards the end of the month.

Aboyne recorded a temperature of 18.3 °C on the 26th January. Aviemore recorded a minimum of -18.6 °C on 7/8 January.

England and Wales diary of highlights

Sunny, mainly mild but significant snow fell in second week and end of month.

1st to 3rd Frequent spells of rain as low pressure and associated fronts stalled then drifted south, some outbreaks were thundery over southern counties. Mild at first but wintry showers in north-east later. A swollen Thames caused local flooding in the Chertsey/Weybridge area on the 3rd.

4th to 6th Cold with sunny periods and some wintry showers in east coast counties. There was overnight frost and some substantial snow in east Kent later on the 6th.

7th to 10th An anticyclone to the north brought very cold ENE winds, snow and widespread overnight frost. The Thames at Oxford was reported as being the highest since 1947. The extreme south-east saw 2 to 5 cm of snow early on the 7th which brought chaos during rush hour. More snow on the 8th affected Greater London south to the M25, NW Kent, Essex and parts of Surrey. Between 4 and 8 cm fell in most places, with up to 12 cm in Essex. In central London it was the heaviest since February 1991. Occasional wintry showers later.

11th to 14th As the high slipped south the frost and patchy freezing fog was displaced by mainly drier and milder conditions. Redhil reached -9.9 °C on the 12th. Windy later with some hill and coastal fog in the west.

15th to 17th A deep depression to the north, brought changeable weather and sunny periods. Rain belts affected the region on the 15th and 17th, with thunder in north-west areas on the 17th and a gust of 72 knots at Capel Curig.

18th to 22nd Very wet in most places as complex low pressure crossed the UK to the North Sea. There were frequent outbreaks of rain and showers, some heavy with thunder, becoming more scattered on the 22nd.

23rd to 27th Breezy but mostly dry with reasonable sunny spells, although there was some rain in the north on the 24th and 25th. An anticyclone to the south-west brought very mild air to many places on the 26th and 27th, East Malling in Kent reached 17.4 °C probably making it the warmest January day in England on record.

28th to 31st Low pressure over the Baltic and high pressure over the north Atlantic and Greenland fed progressively colder air southwards. Snow showers on the 29th left significant falls over Wales and parts of the south-west and central southern England, some thunder was also reported. Later during the 30th more substantial bands of snow affected east coast counties, East Anglia, Essex, Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire,

giving between 5 and 12 cm in most places. North and north-west suburbs of London also experienced a period of heavy snow late afternoon and early evening. There was major disruption and gridlock on motorways in Essex and Hertfordshire; some tube networks were also affected.

Scotland diary of highlights

Cold and dry start, then unsettled and windy.

An anticyclonic spell in the first third of January gave plenty of dry and clear weather with some very low temperatures. Thereafter an unsettled regime prevailed, when deep lows to the north and intense highs to the south gave a windy spell of weather. On the 28th the central pressure of an Atlantic anticyclone reached 1058 hPa, exceptionally high for a mid-latitude, maritime location. The high pressure was responsible for several surges of warm air reaching Scotland in the second half of the month, with a record-breaking temperature of 18.3 °C being recorded at Aboyne.

During the cold and dry spell that lasted from the 3rd to the 11th, the lowest temperatures were experienced on the 7th, when -18 °C was recorded at Aviemore. The weather was often sunny, but there were snow showers in the south-east on the 8th.

The cold spell was immediately followed by several days (the 12th to the 16th) when warm sectors dominated, with much rain in the West Highlands and the temperature reached 14 °C at Aberdeen. Polar air covered Scotland on the 15th, but this was a day of westerly gales, with gusts of 79 m.p.h. at Lerwick and South Uist.

After a week of cyclonic and unsettled weather, warm sectors returned on the 24th and 26th. Over 50 mm of rain was recorded at Dalmally and Sloy on the 24th, and the 26th was the day when the temperature reached 18.3 °C at Aboyne.

From the 27th onward, a cold northerly airstream covered Scotland, bringing snow showers to the north and east. There was severe drifting of snow in Aberdeen and Angus on the 30th.

Northern Ireland diary of highlights

An unsettled month but very sunny.

The period from the 3rd to 11th was fairly dry throughout the province, while the wettest days were recorded on the 2nd, 16th, 19th and 28th. Many areas experienced around half of the month in which little or no sunshine was recorded, but despite this January recorded well above average durations. Across Northern Ireland overall mean temperatures were above normal, indeed the highest daytime temperature of 16.1 °C for the month was recorded at Silent Valley on the 26th which was the highest temperature ever recorded for January in the province.

1st to 2nd The year started off dull and very wet. Moderate and at times heavy rain, with some locally heavy downpours occurred with some areas recording between 12 and 25 mm of rainfall on each of the days. Temperatures were around or slightly above normal.

3rd to 11th On the whole this was a fairly dry period with some light showers occurring, producing only slight amounts of rainfall throughout. Temperatures were mainly below normal while widespread air and ground frosts were recorded on most nights. This was one of the sunniest periods of the month with some areas recording over six hours of sunshine alone on each day between the 3rd and 5th. Little or no sunshine was recorded on the 10th.

12th to 16th Over this period mainly dull but mild conditions prevailed, with little or no sunshine recorded. However the 15th was a sunny day in many places. It was dry on most days, though widespread rain and showers occurring on the 12th and 16th. South-westerly winds were mainly moderate in strength over this period before backing to a southerly direction and increasing to fresh in strength.

17th to 22nd An unsettled spell with a mixture of moderate to heavy rain and showers moving across the Country from the south accompanied with some sunny periods. The highest rainfalls occurred on the 18th and 19th with some areas recording over 25 mm of rainfall over these two days alone.

23rd to 27th A very mild period throughout, with the highest daytime temperatures ever recorded in January occurring on the 26th. The 23rd and 26th were fairly dry, however bands of rain and showers tracked across the province from the south-west to give some moderate to heavy falls on the 24th, 25th and 27th.

28th to 31st A northerly airflow dominated and brought cold unsettled conditions across the province with strong to near gale force winds in places. Wintry precipitation was widespread on the 30th and 31st.

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