

MONTHLY WEATHER REPORT

JANUARY 1981

COMPILED FROM RETURNS OF OFFICIAL AND VOLUNTARY OBSERVERS

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Dull and wet in north-west; mostly dry in south and east.

For much of the month pressure was high to the south-west of the British Isles while a succession of frontal systems crossed all districts from the west or north-west. On the 2nd and early on the 3rd a complex and deep depression passed eastwards near the north of Scotland. Ridges of high pressure intensified as they moved southwards across all areas on the 6th and 7th and on the 10th and 11th. On the 16th a front became slow-moving over central Scotland where it remained until the 17th. From the 18th to the 26th further frontal systems continued eastwards across all areas but on the 27th a strong ridge of high pressure, from an anticyclone over central Europe, became established over much of the United Kingdom.

Weather

The very changeable and windy weather of December continued during the first three weeks of the month, with periods of rain or showers at times. It was cold and snow was frequent in the north although the east and south of the United Kingdom were often quite sunny. There were also some very mild days. The last ten days were mostly very mild and dry, but the end of the month became colder in the south with some persistent fog.

Wind

Throughout the month over the north of the United Kingdom and during the first three weeks in the south winds were often fresh or strong. Gales, severe in places, occurred at times, especially over exposed coasts and high ground in northern districts. Winds were particularly strong in the north and west on the 1st, in all districts on the 3rd and 14th and in the south-west of Britain and over Northern Ireland on the 17th. Winds were mostly between westerly and north-westerly until the 20th. During the remainder of the month they were mainly south-westerly although over southern and central areas they were rather variable at times.

Temperature

This was the first January since 1976 when mean monthly temperatures were above average generally over the United Kingdom. Over Northern Ireland, much of southern and eastern Scotland, England and Wales temperatures were 1 to 2 °C above average. Temperatures were mostly 0.5 to 1 °C above average over most of north-western Scotland, near the east coasts of Scotland and England, at some places on the south coasts of England and Wales, in parts of north-west England, over the Isle of Man and in the Channel Islands. Only in Orkney, Shetland, the far north of the Highland Region and locally on the east coast of the Grampian Region were temperatures below average and even then by less than 1 °C.

The first three weeks of the month were notable, particularly in the east, for short mild interludes in an otherwise mainly cold period. Some days were very mild with maxima of up to 13 °C in places whilst others were very cold with maxima below 3 °C. For example Wick recorded maxima of -3, 7, 11, and 3 °C from the 6th to the 9th. Severe frost was widespread over Scotland on the night of the 15/16th when at Grantown-on-Spey (Highland Region) the temperature fell to -16 °C. From the 21st the remainder of the month was mostly very mild, particularly over eastern Scotland where maxima of at least 11 °C were recorded somewhere each day except

on the 24th and 25th. On the 29th the temperature reached 15.5 °C at Lossiemouth (Grampian Region). However, parts of southern Britain were cold during the last two days with night frost.

Rainfall

Total rainfall for the month was above average over much of the north and west of Scotland, the north of Northern Ireland, north-west England, the north-east of East Anglia, some north-western parts of the Midlands and at a few places in mid- and North Wales. About twice the average was recorded here and there in northern and western Scotland and Co. Antrim. Elsewhere in the United Kingdom rainfall was below average. The Glasgow area had its first month with below-average rainfall since May 1980. Some eastern areas from Tayside to Lincolnshire, parts of the west and south of Wales, the south-west of the Midlands and much of southern England had less than 50 per cent of average.

During the first three weeks of the month showers or longer periods of rain or snow affected all districts although daily rainfall totals were not high in the south and east. Rainfall was particularly heavy and prolonged over the north-west of Britain late on the 1st and on the 2nd when Sloy Main Adit (Strathclyde Region) recorded a two-day total of 144.2 mm. Together with melting snow this rain caused widespread flooding in the west of Scotland, especially in Ayrshire, while landslides were reported in Argyll. On the 16th 91.3 mm fell at Kinloch on the Isle of Rhum. Apart from in the north-west of Scotland the last ten days of the month were mainly dry. However, rain occurred more generally on the 26th but even then amounts were small in the south of Britain.

Snow

Until the 20th snow showers or longer periods of snow, usually turning to rain, were frequent in the north but limited to a few brief occasions in the south. Apart from over the north-east of Scotland snowfalls were mostly confined to the higher ground. Between the 15th and 17th snow was particularly widespread over Scotland where falls were heavy in

places with drifting; road, rail and air traffic were disrupted. Abbotsinch (Glasgow Airport) reported a depth of 20 cm on the 16th. From the 21st snowfall was mainly limited to showers in the far north on the 24th and 25th. By the end of the month the snow-line had receded to the higher mountains of Scotland and all events in the Scottish ski racing calendar were cancelled.

Sunshine

Sunshine was above average over much of the eastern half of Britain, the Glasgow area, most coastal parts of south-west England and the Channel Islands. Elsewhere, including the south of Lincolnshire, the east Midlands, the north-west of East Anglia and some places in Hampshire and Sussex sunshine was below average. Parts of the Western Isles and the Highland Region had less than half the average for the month. London Weather Centre had the second sunniest January (182 per cent of average) since records began in 1929 (1980 was the highest); a contributing factor was probably the reduction of air pollution in recent years.

Most areas, particularly those in sheltered eastern and southern districts enjoyed several sunny days. However, the west of Northern Ireland and Scotland, Orkney and Shetland were often dull.

Fog

Overnight fog formed on occasions, mainly during the last two weeks over southern Britain. Fog, dense and freezing at times was widespread over the south of England and Wales during the last two days, persisting all day in places, especially on the 30th. Many flights to and from London (Heathrow) Airport were delayed or cancelled. Coastal and hill fog were widespread at times during the second half of the month, particularly in western districts.

Miscellaneous Phenomena

Coloured dust, probably of Saharan origin, was brought down by rain over a band from the centre of Northern Ireland to the Grampian Region on the night of the 28/29th.

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						
0 Scotland N	11.6	−10.0	+0.5	−0.2	+0.2	+0.1	+6	147	59
1 Scotland E	12.9	−11.3	+1.3	+0.7	+1.0	+1.0	+2	79	112
2 England E & NE	12.0	−5.0	+1.7	+0.8	+1.1	+0.7	+2	63	120
3 East Anglia	12.0	−4.4	+1.3	+0.9	+1.1	+1.2	+2	75	108
4 Midland Counties	13.5	−4.5	+1.5	+1.3	+1.5	+1.2	−2	71	96
5 England SE & Central S	12.8	−5.5	+1.4	+1.1	+1.3	+1.1	−3	48	122
6 Scotland W	11.9	−10.0	+1.3	+1.1	+1.3	+1.0	+4	114	84
7 England NW & Wales N	12.2	−5.0	+1.2	+1.3	+1.3	+1.2	+3	103	78
8 England SW & Wales S	12.8	−4.5	+1.2	+1.1	+1.1	+1.3	−2	53	91
N Ireland	12.9	−3.4	+1.5	+1.5	+1.6	+1.4	+2	91	76
Scotland	12.9	−11.3	+1.0	+0.5	+0.8	+0.7	+4	113	85
England & Wales	13.5	−5.5	+1.4	+1.1	+1.2	+1.1	0	69	103

*Highest maximum and lowest minimum of District Value Stations