

Monthly Weather Report

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January 1959—Cold; unusually sunny but with wet and foggy periods

Cold northerly winds persisted over much of the country from 2nd to 13th, and then, after a period of quiet, foggy weather, several disturbances moved north-east across the British Isles between the 17th and 23rd giving mostly cold weather in the north and mild weather in the south. The last week of the month was anticyclonic, cold, foggy and dry.

New Year's Day was mild generally, with strong westerly winds and outbreaks of moderate to heavy rain, as a vigorous depression moved rapidly east across Scotland. There was heavy snow in the Isle of Lewis. The depression reached southern Norway on the 2nd and for most of the next two weeks pressure remained low in that area and high between Iceland and Ireland. Cold northerly winds spread over the whole of the British Isles on the 2nd and for the next day or two there were frequent showers, scattered thunderstorms and some sleet or snow locally. The Atlantic ridge temporarily weakened as minor waves on a warm front brought milder air to the southern counties of England on the 5th and 6th, and prolonged falls of rain and snow to many districts south of a line Mersey-Humber. Some places in south-west England had over 1 in. of rain in 12 hr. on the 5th and falls were nearly as large in East Anglia on the night of the 6th/7th, while parts of Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire had 5 in. of level snow which remained on the ground for about 12 days. In the north of England and in Scotland frost persisted all day in many areas; at Dalwhinnie on the 6th temperature failed to rise above 18°F.

There was widespread snow on the 7th as the cold northerly winds spread back again over the whole country, but falls were not heavy. During the next two or three days weather became progressively colder and drier and by the 10th most districts had frost during the morning persisting all day in the north and Midlands. It was fine generally with long sunny periods, although there were a few scattered sleet or snow showers, especially near the east coast.

On the 11th and 12th the northerly winds over the British Isles freshened as a depression, which had moved north-west across eastern Europe to southern Scandinavia, turned south into the North Sea, and associated fronts brought snow at times to all parts of the country. Gales were severe in north-east Scotland on the 11th; a gust of 82 kt. was recorded at Lerwick. Frost, which was widespread on both days, persisted in many places throughout the 11th, but the following afternoon temperatures rose generally to the upper thirties.

The depression over the North Sea moved to the Baltic by 13th and pressure became almost uniform over the British Isles. Fog developed widely during the day, thickening at night, and persisted over much of the country for about four days. Temperature remained low in the foggy areas and did not exceed 25°F. at Renfrew during the 14th and 15th or 24°F. at Birmingham on the 16th.

Mild south-westerly winds spread across the country on the 17th and gave widespread rain. That night was the first without frost for nearly two weeks. The main Atlantic disturbance became almost stationary off the west coast of Ireland from 18th to 20th, and fronts and small depressions, moving north-east across the British Isles gave mild weather in the south but mostly cold weather in the north until the 22nd. Rain was widespread and particularly heavy in parts of northern Scotland on the 18th where some places had 1½ inches in 12 hr. Rain, associated with a depression which moved quickly north-east from southern Ireland to the North Sea on the 22nd, changed to snow over much of eastern Scotland and northern England in the northerly winds which quickly spread over the whole country behind the depression. Snow lay 6 in. deep in parts of Scotland the next morning.

An anticyclone which had been centred near South Greenland on 23rd moved rapidly to cross Ireland on 24th; it became slow moving over Germany on 26th. This anticyclone gave cold and dry weather with a good

deal of fog for most of the last week of the month; however a further anticyclone became established over Scotland on 30th and this development cleared most of the fog apart from that in the Scottish Lowlands.

Pressure and wind. Pressure was above the average in the north-west and below in the south-east; the departure at 9 h. ranging from +4.6 mb. at Stornoway to -3.0 mb. at Felixstowe. Winds were predominantly northerly until the 13th, light and variable for the next three days, then becoming mainly between south and south-west until northerly winds again spread over the country on the 22nd; they were very variable and mostly light during the last week. Gale force was reached on the 1st-6th, 8th-12th, 19th-21st, 23rd, 24th and 26th (17 days) in Scotland and on the 1st, 2nd, 6th-12th, 21st and 22nd in England and Wales (11 days). Gales were fairly widespread in the west on the 1st and 2nd. Gusts reached 73 kt. in the Hebrides on the 1st.

Temperature. It was a cold month with mean temperature 3.7°F. below the 1921-50 average in England and Wales, 4.7°F. below in Scotland and 4.5°F. below in Northern Ireland. The coldest period was around the 15th. In Scotland the 6th was also very cold when grass minimum temperatures at Glenmore Lodge and Cannich fell to -5°F. and -4°F. respectively. There was a mild spell from 17th to 22nd. At a number of places it was the coldest January since 1947.

Extreme temperatures included:—(England and Wales) 55°F. at several places on the 18th, 19th and 22nd, 7°F. at Moor House on the 6th and 7th; (Scotland) 52°F. at Prestwick on the 19th and Gordon Castle on the 28th, 0°F. at Braemar on the 15th; (Northern Ireland) 51°F. at several places on the 18th, 19th and 20th, 13°F. at Ely Lodge on the 16th.

Precipitation. The general precipitation expressed as a percentage of the 1916-50 average was 113 in England and Wales, 78 in Scotland and 65 in Northern Ireland. Less than 25 per cent. of the average occurred locally in south-west Scotland and less than half the average over much of Scotland south of a line Isle of Rhum to Arbroath, and also in the English Lake District. Rainfall exceeded 150 per cent. of the average over an area extending from Dorset to the Wash. Twice the average was recorded in northern Sutherland.

Thunder was heard on 9 days in Scotland and on the 1st-4th, 8th, 9th, 11th and 20th-23rd in England and Wales.

Snow showers were frequent in Scotland with heavier falls on the 1st, 11th and 18th; severe blizzards with heavy drifting occurred in the north-east. Snow-storms in Shetland were unusually severe; on the 1st all roads were blocked by snow, drifts in some cases being 12 feet deep. In Caithness villages were isolated for 13 days with snow-drifts up to 15-20 feet. Ground was snow covered in parts of the Midlands from 2nd to 18th and 23rd to 29th and was 6-9 in. deep in many places around the 10th.

Sunshine. It was exceptionally sunny for January. The general sunshine expressed as a percentage of the 1921-50 average being 172 in England and Wales, 171 in Scotland and 180 in Northern Ireland. Many places, including parts of the London area had twice their average amount of sunshine; at Eskdalemuir and Hull there was 260 per cent. of the average. It was the sunniest January since records began in 1891 at Edinburgh, since 1886 at Durham, and, except for 1952, since 1881 at Kew.

Fog. Fog occurred at some place or other on most mornings, but there were two main periods when fog was widespread and persisted throughout the day - on the 13th-16th and during the last week of the month. In Lincolnshire fog persisted from 23rd-29th, with visibility less than 25 yd. at times - the longest foggy period since 1952.

Miscellaneous Phenomena. The aurora was observed in Scotland on 23 nights.