

Monthly Weather Report

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February 1961 — *Unusually mild*

The month was mainly cyclonic in character although an anticyclone centred over or near Germany dominated the weather during the third week.

The month opened mild and generally sunny, but weather soon became changeable and unsettled. There was rain at times in England and Wales on the night of the 1st and on the 2nd, and showers, some of snow, in Scotland. The 3rd and the 4th were mainly fine days although on the night of the 3rd a wide belt of rain, with snow in the north, moved eastward across the whole country. There was widespread rain also on the 5th associated with troughs of a complex depression to the north of Scotland. On the 6th, north-westerly winds reached gale force in many places, and showers became general behind a small depression as it moved eastwards across Scotland to the North Sea; thunderstorms occurred locally. The 7th and 9th were warm, sunny days with afternoon temperatures reaching 12°C–13°C in places, but the 8th was mild and wet as the warm sector of a complex depression near Iceland moved eastward across the whole country.

By the 10th an anticyclone was centred over western Europe and rain over the British Isles tended to become less frequent. Fog formed extensively over south-east England on the calm, clear night of the 13th/14th but cleared quickly the following morning giving place to a sunny and exceptionally warm day for the time of year. Afternoon temperatures exceeded 17°C in many places in east and south-east England and reached 18°C locally in Kent. In marked contrast the following day was dull and misty in southern districts; in the London area afternoon temperatures failed to reach 10°C.

During the next three or four days pressure remained high over western Europe and a moist, southerly airstream covered the British Isles. Mist and fog became widespread, and although there was some improvement inland during the afternoons, extensive banks of sea fog persisted all day on southern and western coasts.

From 18th to 23rd a complex system of depressions near Iceland maintained fresh south to south-west winds over north-western parts of the British Isles and there were good sunny periods. In southern districts, however, winds were light and variable and weather generally dull with a good deal of mist or fog. During the afternoon of the 20th, easterly winds spread over southern England extending to the whole country the next day as the anticyclone over Germany developed northwards and eastwards. Except for the western seaboard, weather continued dry almost everywhere and by the 23rd there had been in the London area 15 days without measurable rain, the longest such dry period since September 1959.

The general character of the weather changed on the 23rd as the first of a series of fronts from the Atlantic brought rain to parts of south-west England. The next day the blocking anticyclone over Europe declined somewhat and moved eastwards, and from then until the end of the month weather over the British Isles was of a generally unsettled and wet westerly type. There was widespread rain and strong winds on the 24th, 25th and 26th as a succession of active troughs, associated with a complex low pressure area near Iceland, moved north-eastwards over the British Isles; gales were unusually severe on the night of the 26th with gusts exceeding 75 kt at a number of places in Scotland and Northern Ireland; at Tiree a gust of 101 kt was recorded. On the 27th there was heavy rain in southern England as a shallow depression moved eastwards along the English Channel, and on the last day of the month a small disturbance gave fairly extensive rain in the Midlands.

Pressure and Wind — Mean pressure was below the average over a large part of Scotland but above the average elsewhere, the deviation from average at 9h ranging from -2.3 mb at Tiree to +3.7 mb at

Plymouth. Winds were generally between west and south-west until the 14th, becoming mainly southerly until the 20th, and between south and south-east until the 23rd, after which south-westerly winds predominated. Gales, severe at times, were frequent during the first and last weeks of the month; they were widespread on the 6th–7th and 26th–27th. Wind reached gale force on 22 days in Scotland and on the 1st–11th, 13th, 14th, 17th, 22nd–24th and 26th–28th (20 days) in England and Wales. On the evening of the 26th a gust of 101 kt was recorded at Tiree, the highest gust ever recorded by a pressure-tube anemograph in the United Kingdom. The same day a gust of 89 kt was recorded at Lossiemouth.

Temperature — The outstanding feature of the month's weather was its mildness. Mean temperatures were considerably above the 1921–50 average almost everywhere, the excess being 2.7°C in England and Wales, where it was the mildest February since at least 1901, 1.8°C in Scotland, where it was the mildest February for 16 years and 2.2°C in Northern Ireland. The greatest excess was in southern England where nights were unusually mild and frosts very infrequent; at Hastings, Worthing and Bath it was the mildest February since 1926 while Hampstead and Kew had their mildest February since their records began in 1910 and 1871 respectively.

Extremes included: (England and Wales) 18.3°C at Bromley on the 14th, -6.1°C at Moor House on the 4th; (Scotland) 15.6°C at Largs on the 16th, -11.1°C at Glenshee Lodge on the 5th; (Northern Ireland) 13.9°C at Tollymore Park on the 17th, -3.6°C at Aldergrove on the 3rd.

Precipitation — The general precipitation expressed as percentage of the 1916–50 average was 105 in England and Wales, where it was the eighth successive month with above average rainfall, 125 in Scotland and 130 in Northern Ireland. Less than half the average was recorded locally on the Norfolk coast, but more than 150 per cent of the average occurred on the Somerset Plain, around the Thames Estuary, in the lower Clyde Valley, over north-western Scotland and in the lower Foyle Valley. The middle of the month was relatively dry and by the 23rd many stations in southern England had had 15 days or more without measurable rain.

Thunder was heard locally in Scotland on the 6th–9th and 27th–28th, and in England and Wales on the 1st, 2nd, 4th, 6th, 11th, 13th and 24th–26th.

Sleet and snow fell widely in Scotland during the first week and snow lay several inches deep in places on the 2nd–5th. In northern England and the Midlands snow was widespread on the 6th and occurred at one place or another on the 1st, 5th, 11th, 24th, 26th–28th.

Sunshine — The general sunshine expressed as a percentage of the 1921–50 average was 99 in England and Wales, 104 in Scotland and 103 in Northern Ireland. Most of England and Wales had less than average sunshine the deficit being most pronounced in the south-west. A few days of brilliant sunshine, however, raised the totals for the month above average in south Lancashire, North Wales and in west and north-west Scotland.

Fog — In Scotland fog was fairly widespread on the 22nd–25th and it occurred locally almost daily during the first two weeks. In England and Wales it was widespread on 15th–18th and around the 23rd and occurred at one place or another on the 1st–8th, 12th and 14th–25th.

Miscellaneous Phenomena — The aurora was visible in Scotland on 14 nights. A tornado, accompanied by heavy rain, caused damage to buildings in Buckinghamshire on the 25th.