

Dry spells in the south and east, changeable elsewhere

During the first 10 days or so and again in the last week anticyclones predominated over the British Isles, although weak troughs of low pressure occasionally affected the west and north. Between these two periods depressions or troughs of low pressure frequently crossed all districts.

Weather

Most areas were drier than average, especially in the south and east where there were dry spells. However, there were some heavy falls of rain in north-west England and west Scotland around mid-month. Temperatures were generally above average and snowfall was below average.

Wind

On the 2nd and 3rd winds reached gale force locally in north Scotland and a gust of 61 kt was recorded at Lerwick (Shetland) on the 2nd. A windy period occurred in most areas from the 10th to 20th with gales at times, particularly over coasts in the west. On the evening of the 12th a gust of 62 kt was reported at Earls Hill (Stirlingshire). In the early hours of the next day gusts of over 50 kt occurred widely in Scotland, northern England and north Wales and at the same time gusts in excess of 40 kt were recorded as far south as the London area. Strong winds continued to be widespread until the 15th when gusts of 61 kt and 53 kt occurred at places as far apart as Tiree (Inner Hebrides) and Manston (Kent) respectively.

Temperature

Monthly mean temperature was above average everywhere and ranged from about 2 degC above average in a few places in Scotland to near average in southern England. It was generally mild during the first half of the month and again from the 19th to 25th. The 3rd and 4th were unusually mild in many districts, particularly in the east; on the 3rd a temperature of 15.0°C was recorded at Scarborough (North Riding of Yorkshire). An air temperature of 14.2°C was recorded in Falkirk and Stirling on the 4th. Temperatures were below average around the 17th and on the last few days. Overnight frost occurred in many areas during these periods and it was severe in places; the air temperature at Lanark fell to -11.7°C on the morning of the 16th and to -10.0°C at Shawbury (Shropshire) on the 17th.

Rainfall

Rainfall (including melted snow) was below average except in some areas in the north-west of the United Kingdom and in a few places in north Wales but excesses in these districts were mostly small. Over most of east Scotland and

the greater part of England, less than half the average rainfall occurred and, in a few places, under a quarter of average was recorded. It was the driest February at Gordon Castle (Moray) and Forglan House (Banffshire) since records began in 1865 and 1901 respectively. During the first 10 days, only small amounts of rain fell over most of the country and rainfall was chiefly confined to the north and west. Many parts of the east and south were virtually dry during the first fortnight; no measurable rainfall occurred at Cleethorpes (Lincolnshire) until the 13th or at Sandown (Isle of Wight) until the 14th. However, from the 11th to 18th, although amounts of rain elsewhere continued to be mostly small, there were some heavy falls in western and northern areas. The heaviest rain fell in the Lake District where, at Long House, near Langdales (Westmorland) over 132 mm were recorded in the 48 hours commencing 09 GMT on the 11th. Although a little rain fell in the west during the last 10 days of the month, many eastern areas had very small amounts and Cambridge was practically dry after the 19th.

Snow

Amounts of snow or sleet (rain or drizzle and snow) were mostly small and snow did not lie on low ground to any extent. Sleet or snow occurred on the first two days mainly in the north, and on a few days around mid-month in most areas. Overnight on the 15th/16th snow spread into Northern Ireland and south-west Scotland and reached most of England and

Wales during the following day. On the 16th a snow depth of about 7 cm was reported at Aldergrove (Co. Antrim) and depths reached 5-10 cm on high ground in the northern half of England and Wales. On the 21st snow showers fell on high ground in Scotland, Northern Ireland and northern England. Further snow or sleet occurred in southern Scotland and northern England on the last two days of the month and snow depths of 5-10 cm were measured in the Pennines on the 28th.

Sunshine

Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales were generally duller than average. Western Scotland was especially dull and Tiree had only half the average amount (36.5 hours) of sunshine and it was the dullest February here since 1940. Sunshine over the remainder of the country was mostly close to average but London Weather Centre recorded 159 per cent.

Fog

From the 4th to 11th overnight fog patches occurred, mainly in England. Fog patches were particularly dense and slow to clear on the 8th and 11th and air traffic was disrupted for a time on these days. Fog occurred at times during the last week mostly in south Wales and the West Country and was widespread in these areas on the 23rd.

Miscellaneous phenomena

The aurora was seen on 7 nights by observers in Scotland.

Table 1 District Values**February 1971**

District	air temperature °C					mean 30 cm earth temp °C	rain days	rain- fall	sun- shine
	High	Lowest	max.	min.	mean				
	Max. *	Min. *	difference from average						
0 Scotland N	11.1	-6.1	+1.4	+1.1	+1.2	-	-2	90	88
1 Scotland E	14.7	-6.1	+1.5	+1.4	+1.5	+1.4	-5	53	94
2 England N E	13.1	-5.7	+1.3	+0.5	+0.9	+0.9	-7	40	106
3 England E	12.4	-3.4	+0.9	+0.9	+0.9	+1.3	-5	41	104
4 Midlands	12.2	-4.3	+0.9	+0.8	+0.9	+0.9	-5	47	101
5 England S E	12.9	-4.6	+1.0	+0.7	+0.9	+0.7	-5	40	109
6 Scotland W	11.4	-5.0	+1.2	+1.7	+1.4	+1.3	0	107	68
7 Eng NW - Wales N	11.1	-4.4	+0.9	+1.3	+1.1	+1.1	-3	77	95
8 Eng SW - Wales S	12.0	-5.0	+0.9	+0.1	+0.5	+0.6	-4	50	99
N Ireland	12.1	-5.6	+1.0	+1.2	+1.1	-	-1	99	81
Scotland	14.7	-6.1	+1.4	+1.4	+1.4	-	-2	84	83
Eng - Wales	13.1	-5.7	+1.0	+0.7	+0.9	-	-5	50	102

*Highest max. and lowest min. of the District Value Stations.