

MONTHLY WEATHER REPORT OF THE METEOROLOGICAL OFFICE

SUMMARY OF OBSERVATIONS COMPILED FROM RETURNS OF OFFICIAL STATIONS AND VOLUNTEER OBSERVERS

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JANUARY, 1941.—Cold, with frequent snow; dull on the whole in England.

The month was cold, with frequent snow; there was an unusual prevalence of north-easterly and easterly winds and it was mainly dull in England and east and south Scotland. Broadly speaking it was dry in the north-west and west and wet in the east and south.

During the first 12 days weather conditions over the British Isles were influenced by a high pressure system situated sometimes over this country and sometimes to the north or north-west of it. Subsequently on the 11th and 12th the anticyclone moved south-west to a position west of Ireland. Weather, during this period was cold, particularly the first six days, with local precipitation at times, often in the form of snow, but rainfall measurements were mostly slight. Southerly gales were reported locally in the north of Scotland from the 3rd-5th and an easterly gale at the Lizard on the 9th and 10th.

By the 14th pressure was high north-westward of the British Isles and low to the eastward and a spell of cold northerly winds ensued with further wintry precipitation.

Subsequently a depression approached south-west Ireland and deepened and moved very slowly south-east towards the Mouth of the English Channel. There was considerable snow from the 18th-20th and strong, mainly easterly winds, and local gales occurred between the 18th-22nd, causing deep drifts. On the 21st the depression moved north-east to the Irish Sea and rainfall was fairly heavy in some areas. For the remainder of the month a series of Atlantic depressions approached south-west Ireland and moved east or east-south-east, while pressure was high to the north of the British Isles and, later, to the east also. Winds were mainly easterly at first and later mainly south-easterly, while weather was unsettled, dull and rather cold. Precipitation occurred frequently and was moderately heavy at times in the south.

Pressure and Wind.—Mean pressure substantially exceeded the average in the north and was considerably below the average in the south, the deviation from the average at 7h. ranging from +9.9 mb. at Lerwick to -9.5 mb. at the Scilly Isles. The average mean pressure distribution was thus reversed, the highest pressure being found to the north of Scotland. Winds from some easterly or northerly point predominated. Local gales occurred rather frequently, particularly from the 18th onwards, though southerly gales were reported in the extreme north of Scotland from the 3rd-5th and an easterly gale at Lizard on the 9th and 10th. The most widespread gale was experienced between the 18th and 20th and was mainly easterly in direction. Among the highest speeds reported in gusts were 82 m.p.h. at Holyhead and 81 m.p.h. at St. Ann's Head on the 20th and 72 m.p.h. at Spurn Head on the 19th.

Temperature.—Mean temperature was notably low; the deviation from the average was greater than -7°F. over parts of the Midlands and north-west England and over most of Wales, and greater than -8°F. over part of central and north Wales, much of southern Scotland and a large inland area in east Scotland. Over Scotland as a whole the cold was only slightly less exceptional than that of January 1940 but in England and Wales the cold, though noteworthy, was appreciably less intense than in 1940. The first week was markedly cold and another severely cold spell occurred during the third week; at a number of places temperature remained continuously below the freezing-point for several days; thus, at West Linton this condition persisted from the 1st-6th and again from the 15th-20th. Glazed frost occurred at many places in England around the 6th and locally on a few occasions later in the month.

The extremes for the month were:—(England and Wales) 54°F. at Falmouth, Gulval and Newquay on the 24th and at Perranporth on the 24th and 25th, -6°F. at Houghall on the 5th; (Scotland) 48°F. at Cape Wrath on the 9th, Lerwick on the 11th, and Stonehaven on the 13th, -6°F. at West Linton on the 6th; (Northern Ireland) 46°F. at Donaghadee on the 10th, Castlerock on the 12th and 13th and Armagh on the 28th, 12°F. at Garvagh on the 18th.

Precipitation.—The general precipitation expressed as a percentage of the average for the period 1881-1915 was 127 over England and Wales, 56 over Scotland and 67 over Northern Ireland. In Scotland the deficiency was greatest in the west; parts of Argyll and western Inverness had less than 10 per cent of the average. At Fort William, where the percentage of the average was only 4, it was the driest January in 58 years' observations. More than the average was received east of a line drawn roughly from Elgin to Perth and on to Kelso; locally in this area the percentage was approximately 150 and at Kelso it was 186. In England and Wales less than the average occurred over most of north-west England and Wales as well as locally elsewhere; less than 50 per cent was measured over the Lake District and parts of Lancashire and north Wales. More than 150 per cent was received over a large area in the Midlands and north-east England, along much of the south coast and at a few places outside these areas. In Northern Ireland the deficiency was almost general but 142 per cent was reported at Seaforde, County Down.

Among the heaviest falls in 24 hours were 2.33 in. at Banchory (Kincardine) and 1.91 in. at Usk (Monmouth) on the 21st and 2.00 in. at Tairbull School, Brecon, on the 28th.

Snow fell frequently throughout the month. The snowfall of the third week was considerable and strong winds caused deep drifts; snow was lying 15 in. deep at Birmingham on the evening of the 20th and at Bala on the morning of the 21st. Level snow was 1 ft. deep at Hoylelake and Prestwood (Worcestershire) on the 20th and at Lake Vyrnwy on the 21st; at Hoylelake the depth in drifts was 7 to 8 ft. and 10 ft. in places. At Hillsborough, County Down, there were snow drifts 6 to 12 ft. deep on the 19th and at Aldergrove, there were drifts up to 6 ft. on the 18th. In Scotland, the snowstorms were especially severe in the north; parts of Sutherland and Caithness were isolated for several days, being cut off by drifts sometimes 15 ft. deep. Balmoral reported undrifted snow 20 in. deep on the 22nd.

Local thunder was reported at times.

Sunshine.—The percentage of the average duration of sunshine over England and Wales as a whole was 78; in many places the month was unusually dull; for example, at Lympne, Shoeburyness and Cranwell, the totals were the lowest for January since records were first taken. At Ross-on-Wye there were 19 sunless days, the highest number in any one month since registration began in 1914. At some individual stations, however, there was an excess.

In Scotland, sunshine was excessive in the north and at a number of places in western and central districts and distinctly below the average on the whole in the east and south.

Fog.—Local fog occurred frequently; at times it was rather persistent and thick locally, particularly inland.

Miscellaneous Phenomena.—The aurora was observed in Scotland on 16 nights; a brilliant display on the 17th was seen from many places between Lerwick and Eskdalemuir. A solar halo was noted at Oxford on only one day, but there were 20 sunless days.