

MONTHLY WEATHER REPORT

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Unsettled; exceptionally mild at first, becoming cold later

On the 1st a deep depression in the Atlantic south of Iceland and high pressure on the mainland of Europe brought the British Isles into a south-westerly airstream. A new depression formed south-west of Ireland on the 2nd, moved up the western coasts of Ireland and Scotland to cross Scandinavia by midnight on the 4th, followed later by the original depression. By the 6th an extensive trough of low pressure was forming across northern areas of Great Britain. Low pressure continued to affect the whole United Kingdom until the 8th, when the Azores anticyclone began to build a ridge of high pressure northwards to affect southern and eastern parts of Great Britain by the 11th while northern areas still came under the influence of low pressure and frontal systems. On the 17th the ridge of high pressure temporarily gave way to frontal systems which, associated with a deep depression in the Atlantic, crossed all areas by midday on the 18th, when the Azores anticyclone rebuilt the ridge temporarily across southern areas of Great Britain. The complex low-pressure area in the Atlantic pushed fronts quickly into the British Isles from the 19th onwards. Low pressure predominated until the 27th when the Greenland anticyclone extended south-eastwards across the British Isles. This was replaced by the frontal system of a further depression which crossed all areas during the next three days.

Weather

The weather was unsettled throughout the month with a series of fronts and depressions crossing the United Kingdom from west to east. It was generally mild until the 26th, when cold weather with snow showers spread southwards to all parts and persisted for a few days before becoming milder again by the end of the month, although Scotland had colder weather with snow showers from the 5th onwards. Thunderstorms occurred on the south coast of England on the morning of the 25th as a depression approached the south-west. Police and emergency services had to draft in reserves in parts of Great Britain on the night of the 26th after wind and rain brought floods and made many roads impassable in southern areas. In the west of England many roads were blocked and hundreds of homes in Avon, Somerset, Wiltshire and Gloucestershire were flooded, some for the second time in three days. Thousands of hectares of farmland were under water in low-lying areas.

Wind

Wind speeds throughout the month were mostly moderate, but with quite frequent strong winds or gales, especially in western coastal areas. The 3rd was an especially windy day with high gusts recorded at many places in Scotland and northern England; noteworthy were gusts of 85 kn at Leith, Lothian and 79 kn at the Royal Observatory, Edinburgh. Further high gusts recorded during the month included 78 kn at Fair Isle, Shetland on the 13th and 74 kn at Gwennap Head, Cornwall on the 21st. Gale force winds brought down power lines and trees in East Anglia on the 26th and boats were torn from their moorings at Clacton-on-Sea, Essex. The Thames Barrier had to be closed for the second time in its three-year life and in Buckinghamshire areas around the River Ouse

were put on flood alert. Notable high gusts recorded on the 26th were 64 kn at Langdon Bay and 62 kn at Manston, both in Kent. Wind directions were predominantly westerly or southerly during the month except for the 25th to 27th when they were northerly or easterly.

Temperature

Apart from northern Scotland and the northern isles where mean temperatures were normal, most areas had above average temperatures and in some parts of central England the difference was about 2.5 °C above the monthly normal. After the coldest November over central England for 20 years December was the mildest generally since 1974, although in northern Scotland temperatures were near or just below normal.

The 2nd was the warmest day generally with many records being broken: Rhoose Airport, South Glamorgan with 16.7 °C had its highest December temperature since records began there in 1954 and Mount Batten, Devon had 16.1 °C, the highest December temperature there since records began in 1921. In the London area 16.8 °C at Kew Royal Botanic Gardens on the 2nd is the highest December temperature recorded at Kew this century. The highest monthly temperature was 17.2 °C, at Bude, Cornwall on the 2nd. The lowest temperature recorded in the United Kingdom during the month was -20.2 °C at Kinbrace, Highland Region on the 30th. The lowest in England and Wales was -12.7 °C at Bala, Gwynedd on the 30th.

Rainfall

Much of England and Wales had above average rainfall. Only in north-east England, eastern and north-eastern Scotland, Northern Ireland and the Isles of Scilly were rainfall amounts below average. Differences ranged from about half the normal at Newcastle upon Tyne to more than twice the normal at Margate, Kent.

Heavy rain fell in western and northern areas on the 12th and in the south-west on the 23rd. On the 26th there was heavy rain in southern England with some flooding, impassable roads and disruption of traffic. Among heavy daily falls recorded during the month were 98.5 mm at Llydaw Intake,

Gwynedd on the 1st, 81.6 mm at Salen Sub-station, Highland Region on the 5th and 116.5 mm at Honister Pass, Cumbria on the 12th; Honister Pass recorded a noteworthy event on the 20th when it had 138 mm of rain, the heaviest fall reported from 117 rain-gauges each recording falls of more than 50 mm on that day and the highest recorded daily fall of the year at any station. The heavy falls on the 25th/26th were headed by 76 mm at Crewkerne, Somerset.

Snow

Snow showers fell somewhere in Scotland on each day between the 6th and 10th. On the 8th Aviemore, Highland Region had a level snow depth of 10 cm. It was then very mild from the 11th until the 25th when much colder weather moved into Scotland, with wintry showers, before moving southwards over the whole of Great Britain giving some snow in Wales and southern England on the 28th and 29th, but the snow generally melted away quickly on the 30th. A depth of 20 cm was recorded on the morning of the 29th at Boulmer, Northumberland.

Sunshine

In keeping with such a wet month sunshine values were mostly below normal — parts of East Anglia recorded only 60 per cent of average sunshine; in northern Scotland it was sunnier than normal. Amounts generally ranged from 51 per cent at Lowestoft, Suffolk to 175 per cent at Baltasound, Shetland. The highest sunshine total for the month was 63 hours at Penzance, Cornwall.

Fog

Fog was frequent overnight in most areas in the first half of the month, dense at times, and in some places in England and Wales it persisted all day. On the 10th dense fog on the M62 motorway near Huddersfield, West Yorkshire caused a multi-vehicle crash with some fatalities. On the 24th fog developed in northern England during the night and it remained foggy all day in parts of Lancashire and Yorkshire. There was some coastal fog on southern and western coasts around mid month. Hill fog occurred here and there throughout the month.

Miscellaneous Phenomena

None reported.

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					% of average	
0 Scotland N	15.5	−18.3	0.0	−0.3	−0.2	−0.4	+2	124	90
1 Scotland E	15.2	−14.5	+0.6	+0.3	+0.5	+0.6	+2	125	84
2 England E & NE	14.9	−11.1	+1.2	+1.5	+1.3	+1.1	+1	117	82
3 East Anglia	16.6	−9.5	+1.7	+2.5	+2.0	+1.8	+2	147	76
4 Midland Counties	16.0	−10.0	+1.6	+2.1	+1.8	+1.5	+1	130	76
5 England SE & Central S	16.6	−8.4	+1.7	+2.7	+2.2	+1.8	+2	153	86
6 Scotland W	14.0	−14.0	+0.7	+1.0	+0.8	+0.7	+3	121	80
7 England NW & Wales N	15.0	−10.7	+1.0	+1.6	+1.1	+1.3	+2	137	87
8 England SW & Wales S	17.2	−10.6	+1.4	+1.9	+1.4	+1.3	+3	145	81
N Ireland	14.9	−8.0	+0.9	+0.8	+0.8	+0.5	+1	89	103
Scotland	15.5	−18.3	+0.4	+0.3	+0.4	+0.3	+2	124	85
England & Wales	17.2	−11.1	+1.4	+2.1	+1.6	+1.5	+2	136	81

* Highest maximum and lowest minimum of District Value Stations