

MONTHLY WEATHER REPORT

FEBRUARY 1977

COMPILED FROM RETURNS OF OFFICIAL AND VOLUNTARY OBSERVERS

VOLUME 94

NUMBER 2

Mostly very wet, with some snow.

A succession of fronts moved east or north-east across all districts until the 9th. A complex area of low pressure then developed over the British Isles with an almost stationary occlusion lying across central districts from the 10th to the 12th. Frontal systems from the Atlantic again affected all areas between the 13th and the 19th. A depression to the west of Ireland then moved to the south-western approaches, while an occlusion moved northwards to southern Scotland. High pressure became established over Iceland on the 23rd and the occlusion returned southwards during the next few days, as a ridge developed over the British Isles. The anticyclone moved to north-west France at the end of the month and fronts affected western Britain on the 28th.

Weather

Except in northern Scotland, February was wet, with outbreaks of rain or wintry showers and some thunderstorms. The month was cold at first and there was snow in the north, but it then became mild for a time in most districts. Northern areas had a cold spell in the second week and snow fell in the Scottish Highlands. Fog was occasionally persistent during the first half of the month. The unsettled weather continued, with gales in the south on the 18th and prolonged heavy rain in the Midlands between the 20th and 24th. Temperatures fell in northern areas from about the 21st and some heavy falls of snow occurred in the Pennines. It became colder generally towards the end of the month, with long sunny periods in many places and scattered wintry showers.

Wind

Winds were frequently fresh or strong on western and northern coasts and reached gale force at times in exposed places. On the night of the 2nd/3rd the high-level stations at Snaefell (Isle of Man) and Lowther Hill (Strathclyde) recorded gusts of 76 and 75 kt respectively. Gales were severe in western and southern coastal districts of England and Wales on the evening of the 18th, with gusts reaching at least 60 kt in places. Directions were mostly between south and south-west in the first week, but gradually became east to north-east in northern districts. Winds were variable in direction between the 13th and 19th, but a marked contrast then developed, with south-westerlies over southern Britain and east to north-easterlies in the north. The easterly winds gradually spread southwards and directions were mainly south-easterly during the last few days.

Temperature

Monthly mean temperatures were above average in England, Wales, the Isle of Man, southern Scotland and southern counties of Northern Ireland, and were below average elsewhere. Differences from the normal ranged from about +2.5°C in parts of southern England to about -0.5°C in central and northern Scotland. After a cold start it became mild in most districts until the 9th. Northern areas had a brief cold spell in the second week, when the temperature fell to -15.6°C at Keith (Grampian Region) on the night of the 12th/13th. It remained mild by day in many districts until the 19th, and on the 20th temperatures in southern England reached or exceeded 13°C

at several places, but colder weather gradually spread southwards and the last few days of the month were generally rather cold. Occurrences of air frost during February were minimal in many coastal districts and a number of places along the coasts of southern England and South Wales did not record any.

Rainfall (including melted snow)

Rainfall totals in the Highland Region of Scotland and in the Northern Isles contrasted sharply with amounts recorded elsewhere. Some places on the north-western mainland measured only about 40 per cent of their normal rainfall, but monthly totals were above normal almost everywhere else in the United Kingdom and exceeded 200 per cent in many parts. Over three times the normal amount of rain fell along the coastal strip of eastern Scotland from Stonehaven to Fife, and some places in North Wales and in the Severn and Avon valleys also recorded about 300 per cent of average. The wettest area, where rainfall exceeded 400 per cent of the normal, was in Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire. The copious rainfall caused severe flooding in many districts and there were few dry days during the month in England and Wales. Many places in eastern Scotland and in the Midlands had their wettest February on record: in Nottingham it was the wettest since at least 1888.

Snow

Snow and sleet fell mainly at the beginning of the month, between the 10th and 13th and at times from the 20th onwards. Most of the snow fell in northern areas and in the Welsh mountains, but snow and sleet spread into central England in the last week. Depths of 20 to 30 cm were measured in undrifted snow at several places in the Scottish mountains on the 11th and 12th, and high ground was snow covered throughout the month. In northern England, where depths were very

varied, 30 cm were recorded at Great Dun Fell (857 m) in Cumbria on the 23rd, and Thornton Moor (363 m) in West Yorkshire reported 61 cm on the 25th. Snow depths were mostly minimal in southern England.

Sunshine

Monthly sunshine totals were above average along much of the coastal strip of eastern England and in a broad belt from south-east England to the Severn Estuary. The Channel Islands, the Isles of Scilly and the north Welsh coast also had more sunshine than is usual in February, but remaining areas of England and Wales had less than the normal. In Scotland, sunshine totals were above average in a band from the Firth of Clyde to the southern shore of the Firth of Forth, over most of the Highland Region and also in the Outer Hebrides and the Northern Isles. Values were below average elsewhere in Scotland. In Northern Ireland, where sunshine was less than 70 per cent of average, it was the dullest February since 1954, but in London and in parts of north-west Scotland totals exceeded 150 per cent of the normal.

Fog

Most of the fog which formed during the month occurred during the first two weeks. The fog was sometimes dense and freezing and it persisted in the Central Lowlands of Scotland and in Northern Ireland on the 8th and in parts of southern England and the Midlands on the 15th. Coastal fog was sometimes reported, but hill fog, which was often associated with precipitation, occurred fairly frequently until mid-month and was extensive locally. Patches of overnight fog occasionally developed during the second half of the month.

Miscellaneous Phenomena

The aurora was observed in Scotland on 3 nights.

Table 1 District values

District	air temperature °C					mean 30-cm earth temp °C	rain-days	rainfall	sun-shine
	Highest Max *	Lowest Min.*	max.	min.	mean				
	difference from average								
0 Scotland N	9.0	-5.6	-0.5	0.0	-0.2	-0.5	-1	86	116
1 Scotland E	10.5	-12.3	-0.4	+0.1	-0.1	0.0	+3	179	100
2 England E & NE	11.3	-5.6	+0.5	+1.2	+0.9	+0.6	+7	206	90
3 East Anglia	12.0	-5.5	+1.7	+1.8	+1.8	+1.2	+7	193	103
4 Midland Counties	12.0	-5.3	+1.1	+1.4	+1.3	+0.7	+9	265	90
5 England SE & Central S	12.7	-5.1	+2.2	+2.2	+2.3	+1.3	+8	192	119
6 Scotland W	9.0	-9.3	-0.2	+0.4	+0.1	-0.2	+3	135	92
7 England NW & Wales N	10.8	-7.5	+0.4	+1.2	+0.8	+0.4	+7	197	83
8 England SW & Wales S	13.1	-2.8	+1.6	+2.0	+1.8	+1.0	+9	225	97
N Ireland	10.1	-5.5	-0.3	+0.2	0.0	-0.2	+4	219	68
Scotland	10.5	-12.3	-0.4	+0.2	-0.1	-0.2	+2	133	103
England & Wales	13.1	-7.5	+1.3	+1.6	+1.5	+0.9	+8	213	97

*Highest maximum and lowest minimum of District Value Stations.