

MONTHLY WEATHER REPORT

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Cold, with snow; quite sunny in places

Depressions and fronts from the west crossed all districts during the first week. An anticyclone then formed over the English Channel and persisted until the 13th, when it linked with an area of high pressure over Scandinavia and moved away to the south-east. Pressure remained high to the north-east and fronts moved slowly into the British Isles from the west and south. An anticyclone became established over Iceland on the 19th and extended a ridge south-eastwards from the 23rd to the 26th. Troughs of low pressure moved southwards until the last few days of the month, when fronts and depressions again approached from the west.

Weather

December was cold, with wintry showers in many districts. There were heavier falls of snow at times, particularly in the north. The wettest areas were generally in eastern, central and southern England and there were thunderstorms during the first week, mostly in the south-west. There were gales at times, particularly on the first two days, from the 5th to the 8th and on the 29th and 30th. Fog was dense, freezing and slow to clear in places, mainly affecting northern districts on the 3rd and 4th and most areas at times during the second and third weeks. Except in Northern Ireland, however, many places had quite a sunny month.

Wind

Winds were fresh or strong at times during the month on exposed coasts, but were sometimes light, particularly during the second week. There were also some gales and these were severe in the English Channel area at the beginning of the month; gusts exceeding 70 kt were recorded in south-west England and the Channel Islands on the 1st. Winds again reached gale force between the 5th and the 8th and further gales affected east coast districts during the third week and Irish Sea coasts on the 29th and 30th. Directions were mainly between south-west and north-west until the 12th, when speeds became light and directions variable for a few days. South-east to north-east winds predominated from around mid month until the beginning of the fourth week. Winds then blew from northerly points, becoming cyclonic, mostly between south-west and south-east, during the last few days.

Temperature

Monthly mean temperatures were below average everywhere, mostly by 2 to 3 degC, but by about 1 to 2 degC in parts of south-east England and on some coasts, and by more than 3 degC in parts of northern and western Scotland and in isolated places in Northern Ireland and the south-west Midlands. It was the coldest December generally since 1950. In northern areas the coldest weather occurred in the first week, the temperature falling to -15.8 °C at both Lagganlia (Highland Region) and Crawfordjohn in the Southern Uplands on the night of the 2nd/3rd: the extremely low temperatures caused two trains to be stranded near Beattock Summit. At Glasgow Airport the daytime temperature did not rise above -5 °C on the 3rd. In the south the coldest night was the 28th/29th, when

temperatures fell below -11 °C at several places in the south Midlands and central southern England. The highest daily maxima during the month were recorded in the south-west, where the temperature at the Lizard (Cornwall) rose to 11.5 °C on the 22nd.

Rainfall

Monthly rainfall totals varied considerably. Amounts were above average along the eastern coastal strip of Scotland and north-east England, in a few places in North and South Wales, and over much of eastern, central and southern England. Values exceeded 150 per cent in places and were not far short of 200 per cent in the Aberdeen area and in parts of Bedfordshire. Totals were below normal in most western and northern districts. Much of north-west Scotland and some places in north-west England and Wales had less than half their average rainfall and in parts of the Scottish Highlands this was the driest December for many years, with several places recording less than 35 per cent of the normal. Much of the precipitation during the month was of a wintry or showery character, but rain fell in many areas on the 1st, in the third week and at the end of the month. There were very few daily falls exceeding 50 mm.

Snow

Falls of snow, or wintry showers, occurred mainly from the 1st to the 12th, during the third week and from about the 27th onwards. In Scotland and the north of England undrifted snow accumulated to depths exceeding 20 cm at times during these periods, particularly from the 17th to the 21st: depths of more than 30 cm were measured in level snow at a few places. Farther south also, maximum depths were recorded during the same periods, especially on the 17th, but amounts were not as great. There were blizzards in Scotland and northern England at the end of the month. Snow cover was unusually persistent in

these areas and remained throughout the month at some high-level stations. In parts of Scotland the number of days with snow lying in December was the greatest for at least 60 years.

Sunshine

Except in Northern Ireland, where most districts had less sunshine than is usual for December, and in part of south-west England, monthly sunshine totals were mostly near to or above average. Amounts exceeded 150 per cent of the normal in parts of Shetland and southern Scotland and in isolated places on the eastern side of England and in the Midlands. In the Glasgow area, where almost twice the normal amount was recorded, this was the sunniest December since 1967. Long sunny periods mostly occurred during the first twelve days and in the last week, although fog reduced totals in some places.

Fog

Fog affected most areas during the month and formed more frequently in Northern Ireland than is usual in December. The fog, which was often dense and freezing, mostly occurred in the middle of the first week and during the second and third weeks. It persisted all day in places, particularly in northern districts on the 3rd and in many areas on the 13th and from the 21st to the 23rd. A number of road accidents, causing injury and loss of life, occurred in thick fog and about 50 vehicles were said to have been involved in a collision near the Yorkshire/Lancashire border on the 22nd. Hill fog developed at times and was extensive in some districts on the 19th and 20th.

Miscellaneous Phenomena

On the night of the 7th/8th, a whirlwind, which lifted sheds into the air and damaged walls and roofs, was reported at Landford, near Salisbury (Wiltshire). The aurora was observed in Scotland on one night.

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	8.2	-8.0	-2.4	-2.1	-2.2	-1.5	-3	48	117
1 Scotland E	7.2	-13.0	-2.7	-2.1	-2.4	-0.8	0	98	134
2 England E & NE	8.4	-6.9	-2.5	-1.7	-2.1	-1.2	+2	118	143
3 East Anglia	9.1	-8.9	-2.4	-1.8	-2.1	-1.3	0	108	137
4 Midland Counties	9.7	-9.3	-2.6	-2.5	-2.5	-1.7	-1	118	138
5 England SE & Central S	10.5	-11.0	-2.1	-2.1	-2.1	-1.6	-3	118	125
6 Scotland W	8.5	-11.3	-2.8	-2.5	-2.6	-1.3	0	64	132
7 England NW & Wales N	9.9	-12.4	-2.6	-2.1	-2.4	-1.1	-1	70	115
8 England SW & Wales S	11.4	-6.8	-2.3	-2.3	-2.3	-1.9	-2	103	100
N Ireland	9.2	-7.5	-2.8	-2.4	-2.6	-0.6	-3	94	84
Scotland	8.5	-13.0	-2.6	-2.2	-2.4	-1.2	-1	70	128
England & Wales	11.4	-12.4	-2.4	-2.1	-2.3	-1.5	-1	106	126

*Highest maximum and lowest minimum of District Value Stations.