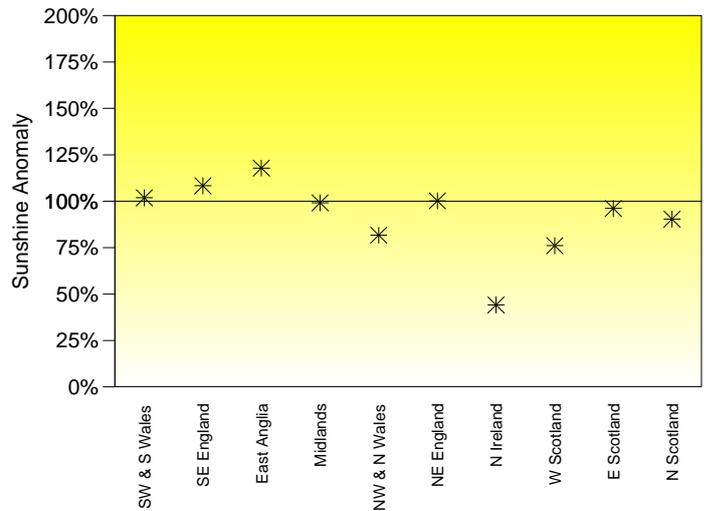
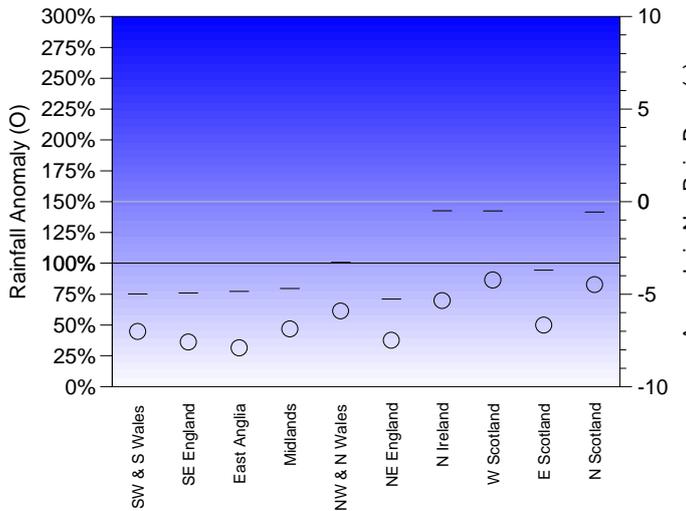


Extremes for February 2012	
Hottest:	18.7°C Coleshill, Warwickshire, 23rd
Coldest:	-15.6°C Holbeach SAWS, Lincolnshire, 11th
Most Rain:	47.9mm Capel Curig SAWS, Gwynedd, 22nd
Most Sun:	10.5hrs Portchester, Hampshire, 26th
Windiest:	74mph Foula No 2, Shetland, 24th
Warmest:	8.1°C Scilly St. Mary's SAWS, Cornwall
Coolest:	2.8°C Faversham, Kent
Wettest:	307.2mm Cluanie Inn No 3, Ross & Cromarty
Driest:	0.4mm Writtle, Essex
Sunniest:	106.1hrs Royston, Hertfordshire
Dullest:	16.7hrs Threave, Kirkcudbrightshire



Although February is still officially a winter month, the days lengthen noticeably and daffodils may come into bloom at the end, giving a promise of spring around the corner. Harsh winter weather is not uncommon, but it can also be a very dry month, as was the case this year.

High pressure over north-west Russia and Scandinavia was the dominant feature of the first 11 days. As a result, easterly winds brought frigid weather to the south and east, while the west and north were less cold, and it was even mild at times in western Scotland and Northern Ireland. The crisp continental air was often incredibly dry, and at midday on the 2nd, London had a temperature of 1°C (34°F) and a dew point of -10°C (14°F)! On the 4th, Atlantic fronts made a sortie from the west, bringing mostly rain to the west and north but some substantial snowfalls overnight to central and eastern England. There was disruption to flights at Heathrow and to traffic on the M25 and M40. The occlusion stalled over eastern areas on the 5th and a slight thaw followed on the 6th but the cold conditions set in with a vengeance the next day. Milder weather made another attempt to encroach from the north-west on the 9th, but the weakening warm front brought a spell of freezing rain to northern England and southern Scotland. This caused much disruption to transport, especially on the A66 trans-Pennine route, and there were scores of minor injuries as people skidded on ice. The milder air again failed to reach eastern England and temperatures here were much lower than in northern Scotland. The cold spell reached its climax early on the 11th, when -15.6°C (3°F) was recorded at Holbeach, Lincs. The following night was almost as chilly, but before dawn on the 12th, less cold air reached all but the far south-east. Milder north-westerlies then set in, bringing large amounts of cloud and a little rain, although there was some brightness to the lee of high ground. By the 16th, it was much milder everywhere as the wind backed to westerly, but the 18th saw a short lived plunge of cold air southwards and snow showers on high ground in the north. Snow pellets were observed even on modest hills such as Arnside Knott, Cumbria. A sharp frost greeted the new working week in central and southern England early on the 20th, but a mild westerly regime soon dominated again with copious rain, drizzle and hill fog in western areas. Cloud often broke in the east and to the lee of hills and the 23rd was positively spring-like with 18.7°C (65°F) at Coleshill, Warwickshire. This was all the more noteworthy given the very low temperatures two weeks earlier. Temperatures fell on the 24th behind a cold front, but the final few days of the month were mainly quiet, mild and cloudy. Dyce Airport, Aberdeen, reached 17.2°C (63°F) on the 28th, just 0.7°C short of its all-time February record.

The mild weather counterbalanced the earlier cold spell, so that the average UK temperature was slightly above average, though it was a little colder than normal over parts of East Anglia and southern England, and very mild in northern Scotland. It was another very dry month in much of central, southern and eastern England, and East Anglia and Lincolnshire had one of their driest Februaries ever. Sunshine was above average everywhere except in western Scotland which had been influenced by Atlantic fronts.

Large parts of Europe were affected by a powerful 'cold wave' in the first fortnight of February. On the 3rd, the temperature in Kvikjokk in northern Sweden fell to -42.7°C (-45°F), the lowest temperature in Sweden since 2001! Further south, on the 6th, Samedan, Switzerland, recorded -35.1°C (-32°F) and Oberstdorf in Germany -29.4°C (-22°F). The following day, Kvilda in the Czech Republic plunged to an extraordinary -39.4°C (-39°F). In the Bulgarian capital of Sofia, some residents found their money literally frozen as automated bank and cash machines stopped functioning. In Bosnia, remote areas in the east were cut off and snow piled 5m deep in isolated areas in Romania, Moldova and Albania. Army trucks and helicopters brought food and medicine to 250,000 Albanians in villages left marooned by deep snow. The roofs of about two dozen houses, including that of a 300-year-old church in south-eastern Albania, collapsed under the sheer weight of the snow. Rome received snowfall for only the second time in the past 15 years and the Coliseum had to shut its doors to tourists after bits of the massive structure crumbled. The icy blast extended into North Africa: In Algeria, the capital Algiers was blanketed by snow and at Medea in the Atlas Mountains the snow depth reached 56cm. On the 7th, snow also lay across parts of Libya, including the town of Gharyan, just southwest of the capital Tripoli.

Further afield, summer monsoonal rains brought torrential rain and flooding to Queensland and New South Wales, north-eastern Australia during the first week. Tropical Cyclone Giovanna struck the island of Madagascar in the South Indian Ocean on the 14th. The storm roared ashore on the east coast near the port city of Tamatave packing maximum sustained winds of 143mph - equivalent to a category 4 Hurricane. Tens of thousands of residents lost power and hundreds of rural villages were isolated for more than a week. Numerous trees and power lines were downed and several dozen families were forced to evacuate their homes due to rising floodwaters.