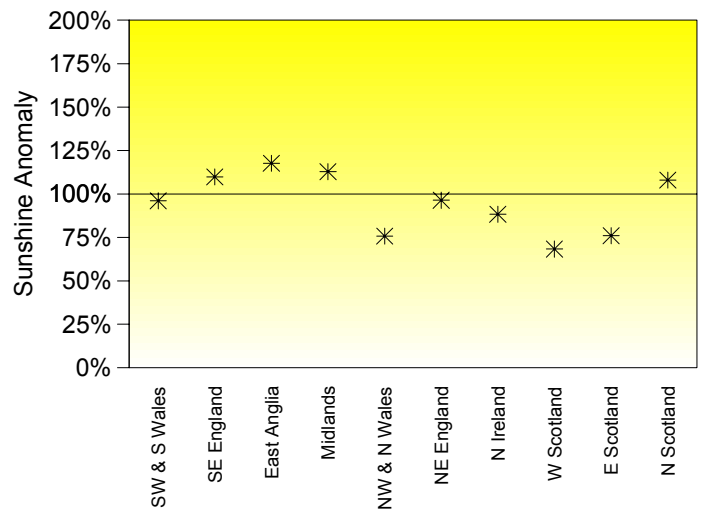
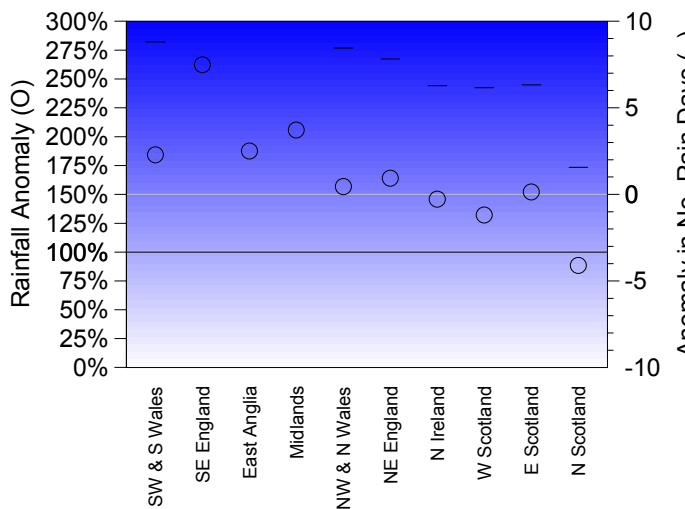


Extremes for January 2014	
Hottest:	14.0°C Bude, Cornwall, 5th
Coldest:	-6.0°C Katesbridge, County Down, 14th
Most Rain:	69.2mm Tyndrum No 3, Perthshire, 3rd
Most Sun:	7.9hrs Guernsey Airport, Channel Islands, 11th
Windiest:	82mph Mumbles Head, West Glamorgan, 3rd
Warmest:	8.8°C Scilly St. Mary's SAWS, Cornwall
Coolest:	2.2°C Dalwhinnie No 2, Tayside
Wettest:	411.8mm Tyndrum No 3, Perthshire
Driest:	18.8mm Mona, Gwynedd
Sunniest:	89.3hrs Wokingham, Berkshire
Dullest:	10.6hrs Eskdalemuir, Dumfries and Galloway



For much of the UK, January is the coldest and the snowiest month of the year - despite the lengthening days. It is also renowned for being the stormiest, and according to Lamb's calendar of singularities, especially so during the first fortnight. This year provided dramatic corroboration of this as a seemingly unbroken chain of depressions crossed our shores.

A wet New Year's Day was merely the prelude to a very wet and stormy first week, during which hail and thunder were also widespread. On the 3rd, Needles Old Battery (Isle of Wight), recorded a gust of 106mph. Such was the strength of the winds in combination with spring tides on the south coast that coastal landmarks such as Pom Pom rock near Portland (Dorset) were lost forever. Swells in the south western approaches reached 9m early on the 7th combined with gigantic waves. The sea front at Aberystwyth (Ceredigion) was extensively damaged and a section of the sea defences at Llanbedr (Gwynedd) was breached resulting in the inundation of 1000 acres of agricultural land. It remained unsettled, if a little less stormy, throughout the second week. By the 18th, pressure was building over Scandinavia but this merely slowed the frontal systems scudding across the UK and resulted in dull, damp and misty conditions. Fog was particularly widespread on the 21st. An active front moving south-east on the 25th brought hail, thunder and squalls before another very deep depression gave widespread rain and gales on the 26th with snow for parts of Scotland (12 cm at Kindrogan, Perthshire). The low then drifted south over the UK during the next few days, bringing further spells of rain. Colder air briefly incurred from the east on the 29th and 30th, but this was soon swept away and on the 31st a vigorous depression drove gales and rain eastwards.

By the month's end, many parts of the Somerset levels had been underwater for nearly four weeks and over 28,000 acres of land was flooded, cutting off homes and threatening the livelihoods of farmers. South-east England had its wettest ever January - and indeed its wettest ever calendar month - and for the UK overall it was the third wettest January in 100 years. Northern Scotland was out of the main firing line of the depressions and so was significantly drier than average. It was a mild month everywhere and, interestingly, sunshine was close to average despite the rain.

In Europe, a mild start to the year saw remarkable, balmy early morning temperatures in southern France on the 8th with 18°C (64°F) in Biarritz and 19°C (66°F) in Bustince. However severe winter storms were soon to follow... Between 16th and 20th unusually heavy rain swamped the French Riviera, leaving thousands without electricity. Dozens of roads were impassable including in resort towns such as St-Tropez and villages in Provence. Nice recorded 146mm of rain 16th-19th (the normal monthly rainfall for the whole of January is 69 mm), while in surrounding hills up to 200mm was recorded. During the last week of January, a severe cold spell swept across central and eastern Europe. In Bulgaria, blizzards left dozens of villages in the eastern half of the country without electricity and water. The main Black Sea port of Varna was shut because of gales. Snow even fell on the central Adriatic coast in Croatia, closing schools in Sibenik.

Several waves of extreme winter weather affected North America. A snowstorm hit north-east states on the 3rd. Boxford, just north of Boston, received 53 cm of snow and parts of upstate New York 90cm. Long-standing records were shattered across the East and South USA on the 7th. The cold wave closed schools, froze pipes and caused significant flight delays. Numerous extreme lows were recorded including: -16°C (4°F) in New York City's Central Park and -22°C (-8°F) in Zanesville, Ohio. Just days after this arctic blast, severe thunderstorms and isolated tornadoes left a trail of damage, from eastern Alabama and the Florida Panhandle to North Carolina. Winds gusted to 86mph at the Raleigh-Durham International Airport, North Carolina. Snowfall overnight 24th-25th pushed the month's snowfall total in Detroit to 81cm, breaking the previous snowiest January record set in 1978 and Chicago had its third snowiest January on record with a total of 84cm. On the 29th a devastating ice storm turned Atlanta into a slippery mess, stranding thousands for hours on frozen roadways. This storm swept over a region largely unaccustomed to ice and snow - from Texas through Georgia and into the Carolinas. Meanwhile, much of the eastern USA was buried under yet another heavy snowstorm that brought as much as 40cm of snow on 23rd. Schools in Boston and Philadelphia were closed and 4,400 flights were cancelled.

On 11th-12th category five Cyclone Ian hit Tonga with gusts up to 180 mph. On the 15th days of heavy rainfall caused by a tropical low resulted in numerous mudslides and widespread flooding across the southern Philippines. 340,000 people were affected by flooding, 200,000 residents had to be evacuated and 42 were killed. Meanwhile heat and drought continued to affect Australia and culminated in raging bushfires. On the 3rd Moomba, South Australia hit 49.3°C (120°F) and on the 14th, soaring temperatures at the Australian Open tennis tournament halted matches as Melbourne sweltered in 42°C (108°F)