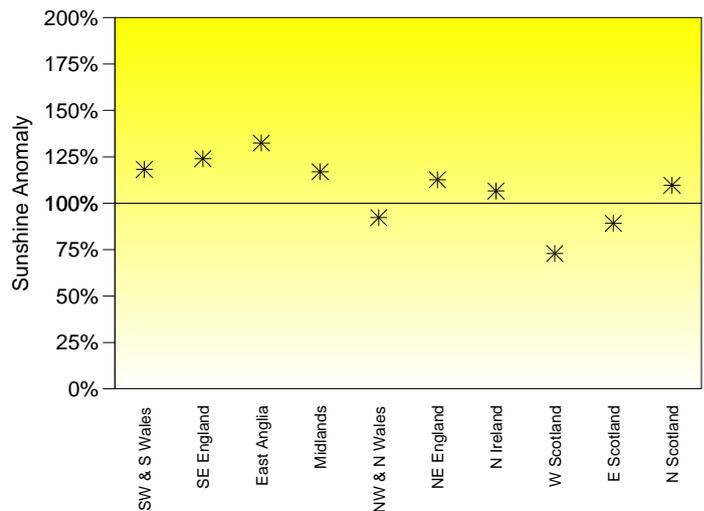
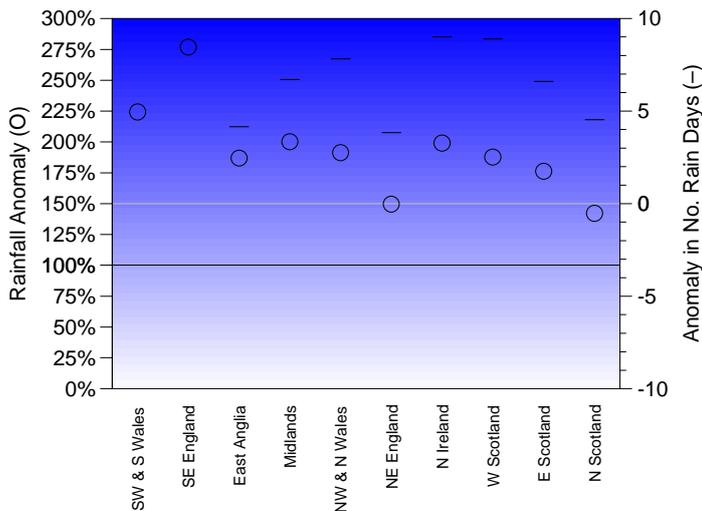


Extremes for February 2014	
Hottest:	14.9°C Heathrow, Greater London, 24th
Coldest:	-7.2°C Kinbrace, Highland, 17th
Most Rain:	64.8mm Kinlochewe, Highland, 13th
Most Sun:	9.8hrs Calthorpe, Norfolk, 26th
Windiest:	108mph Aberdaron SAWS, Gwynedd, 12th
Warmest:	8.5°C Jersey St Helier, Channel Islands
Coolest:	2.3°C Dalwhinnie No 2, Tayside
Wettest:	435.2mm Tyndrum No 3, Perthshire
Driest:	33.0mm Durham, Durham
Sunniest:	127.7hrs Jersey St Helier, Channel Islands
Dullest:	14.3hrs Eskdalemuir, Dumfries and Galloway



The 2nd of February or Candlemas Day marks the half-way point between the winter solstice and the spring equinox. It was traditionally seen as a time to light and bless candles - and to drive the darkness out. Certainly the hours of daylight start to increase markedly from this point, but it rarely means the end of winter weather. After the gales that characterise December and January, February is often rather drier and colder - but not this year...

The very stormy weather of January continued relentlessly during the first half of February as a sequence of very deep depressions battered the UK. Parts of the Somerset levels remained under water for the entire month, with significant impacts on agricultural land and village communities that were left accessible only by boat. Parts of Oxfordshire, Berkshire and Surrey also experienced severe flooding as the Thames rose to its highest level for many years. The unbroken series of storms also caused damage to sea defences and coastlines in the south and west. Huge waves severed the rail link towards Cornwall at Dawlish (Devon) on the 5th - and just a week later on the 12th, another severe storm ("Tini") swept across England and Wales, felling many trees and leaving some 100,000 homes and businesses without power. On this occasion, damage was most extensive across north Wales and north-west England, but a further storm ("Ulla") blasted the south later on the 14th and early on the 15th. Needles Old Battery (Isle of Wight) recorded a gust of 109mph and a motorist was killed in central London after falling masonry struck a car. Scotland escaped the worst of the storms, but was sometimes in the colder air on the northern edge of fronts, resulting in heavy snow on high ground. 20cm was measured at Tulloch Bridge (Highland) at 0900 on the 12th - and snow fell extensively over the northern Pennines on the 14th. As temperatures rose, significant avalanches were experienced in the Scottish mountains throughout the second half of the month. After a day of blustery showers and easing winds on the 15th, a brighter, quieter day followed on the 16th. It remained unsettled, although rather less windy, for all of the final fortnight. There was very little wintry weather away from highest ground in the north and indeed, frosts were rare anywhere during the entire month. It became quite spring like for some on the 24th, courtesy of a southerly airstream, and 14.9°C (59°F) was logged at several sites in the Greater London area.

February as a whole was a mild month everywhere. For most of the UK, it was also very wet. A broad area covering Wales and southern England received twice its normal rainfall and some places nearly three times. It was rather drier in the north and east but over the UK as a whole, it was the 4th wettest February in more than 100 years and sealed the wettest winter since records began. Despite being so wet, south-east England had above average sunshine, but western districts were relatively dull.

Around the northern hemisphere and despite the strengthening sun, winter showed it had not yet relinquished its bite... Torrential rain and storms brought chaos to western Europe from the 1st to the 3rd. In Ireland, Valentia Observatory recorded its wettest February in 148 years with 292.4mm - 236% of normal. On the 12th, Shannon airport recorded a gust of 99mph, the highest for February in more than 60 years. Hundreds of people were forced to evacuate their homes in the Italian city of Pisa as the River Arno burst its banks. Blizzards and devastating ice storms in Slovenia brought down electricity lines and trees, weighed down by tons of ice - and left one in four homes without power. In Croatia and Serbia, hundreds of people had to be rescued from snow drifts.

In the US, a huge snow storm wrought havoc in the southern states before blanketing the densely populated north-east on the 13th. Half a million homes and businesses lost power, and thousands of flights were cancelled. The weather system affected 22 states from Texas to Maine and caused a dozen deaths with the storm dumping more than 30cm of snow in the Washington DC region. Power lines were left coated in up to an inch of ice, there were numerous road accidents and residents were left marooned and shivering in their darkened homes. Thousands of vehicles were stranded and abandoned on snowbound motorways around Raleigh, North Carolina. Three days after the storm, 450,000 people remained without power. Ice coverage on Lake Superior reached 90% on the 13th - a record in recent history. Winter storms also affected Asia and the far east during February. Up to 2m of snow fall in northern Iran on the 5th left 480,000 homes without power and some towns and villages cut off. On the 6th, snowstorms in China disrupted railway transport and blocked roads while in Japan from the 14-17th, a massive storm dumped 1½m of level snow in some areas leaving thousands cut off and hundreds of cars and trucks stranded. 12 people died and at least 1000 were injured. Some areas in northern Japan remained cut off for several days and troops were employed to help dig out stranded cars and trucks.

On the 11th, a 20,000-hectare bushfire destroyed houses in suburbs north of Melbourne as south east Australia sweltered. Throughout the state of Victoria about 180,000 hectares were left ablaze.